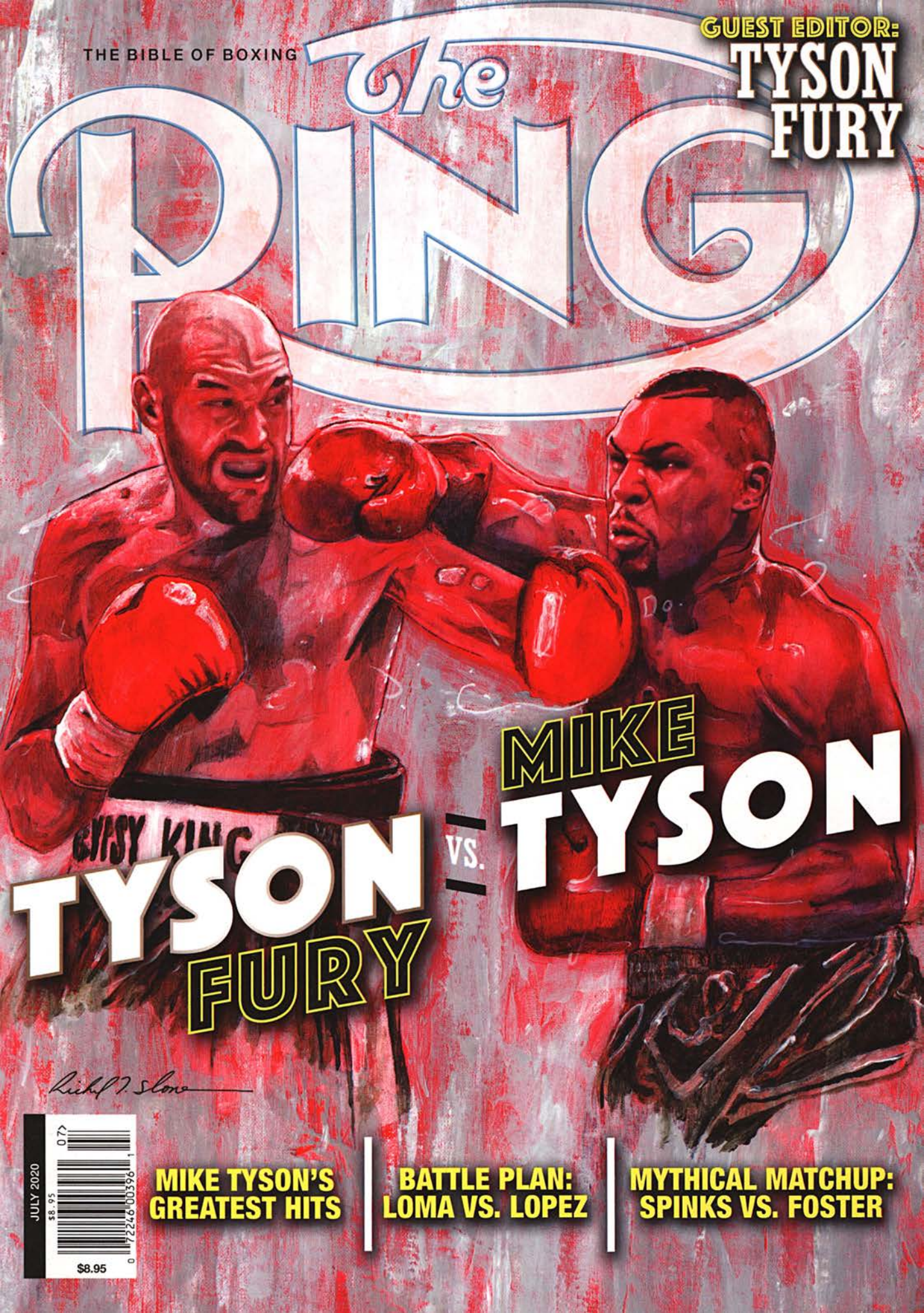
THE BIBLE OF BOXING
The RING
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GYPSY KING
TYSON FURY
VS.
MIKE TYSON
MIKE TYSON'S GREATEST HITS
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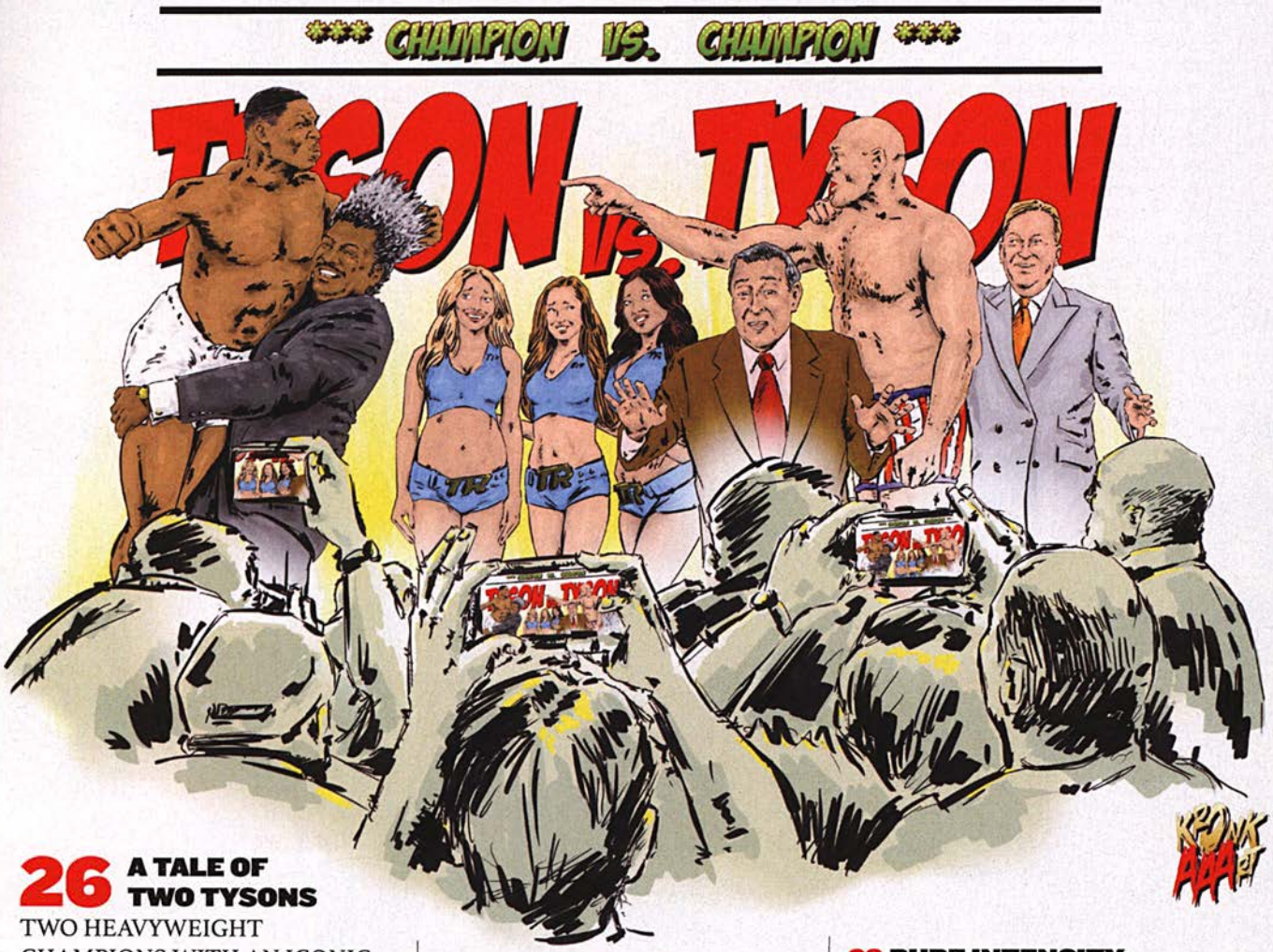

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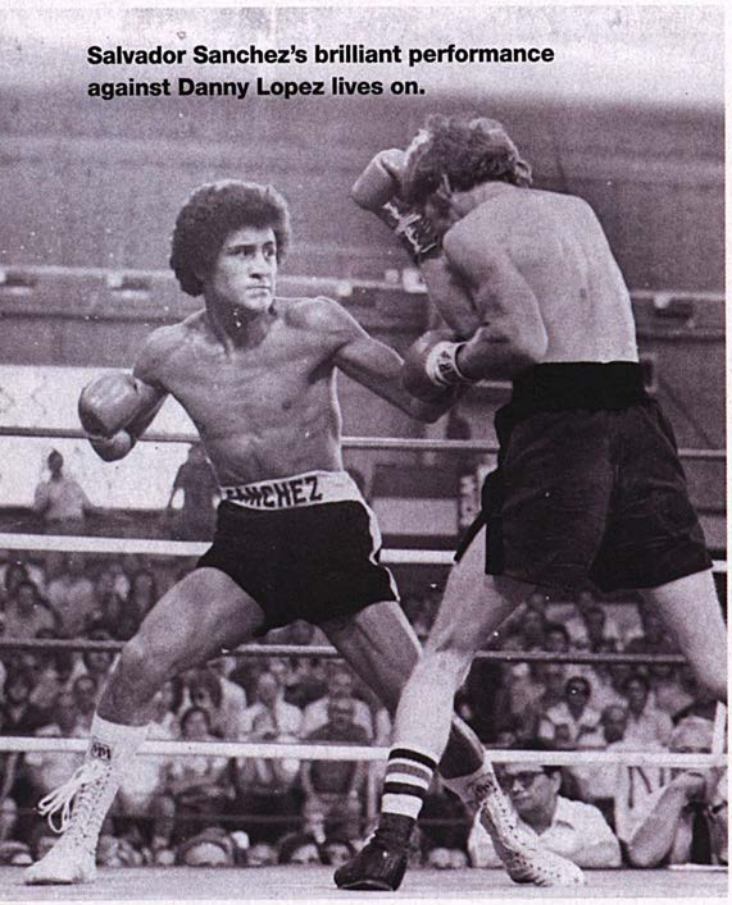
OPENING SHOT

A mural in downtown Denver, Colorado, symbolizes the "fight" that medical professionals face treating those stricken with COVID-19, as well as the challenge all individuals have with changing social routines to stem the spread of the virus. See the Fighter of the Month (page 10) and "Warrior of Mercy" (page 79) features in this magazine for examples of boxers on the front line of the pandemic battle.

PHOTO BY RICK T. WILKING



Salvador Sanchez's brilliant performance against Danny Lopez lives on.

ONLINE IMMORTAL

Owing to the horrible coronavirus that is affecting almost every country on God's earth, I took the opportunity of looking through some old fights on YouTube and came up with a real war in Danny "Little Red" Lopez against the tragic and ill-fated Salvador Sanchez for the WBC featherweight title.

After 13 rounds of toe-to-toe action, the referee decided Lopez had taken enough and called the bout off, giving Sanchez the victory. I didn't realize that Sanchez was that good. He must rank as the greatest featherweight ever, and he was only 21 at the time, nowhere near his peak!

Lopez gave everything, considering he had one eye closed for about eight rounds, but Sanchez was something else. I don't think many other featherweights would have wanted to fight him. I think if there were a pound-for-pound list for all-timers, Sanchez must be in the top 10. What a star.

Of course it all ended so shockingly when he lost his life in a car crash at the age of 23. What a tragedy, and it prevented so many boxing fans the chance to see one of the greatest ever.

Paul Barker
Swanwick, U.K.

BEING THERE

I have been reading The Ring Magazine since the late 1940s, and your May 2020 issue with the mythical matchup with Rocky Graziano vs. Rubin "Hurricane" Carter was easily one of the most exciting and well-written articles it has been my pleasure to read. I felt like I was sitting right there, and it brought back memories for me of seeing them both fight. I have read many "What if" fights, but not like this one. Just an absolutely terrific, unique perspective from a former fighter and referee who knew them both. I can't wait for the next one from Mr. Lipton. I kind of thought Carter might have won this fight, but reading it like Mr. Lipton wrote it made it so real I have no complaints.

Paul Levy
Bronx, N.Y.

FOTY?

Let me be the latest to jump on the bandwagon and congratulate Tyson Fury for regaining the heavyweight championship. I didn't think he could fight at 273 pounds, but he proved me wrong by dominating Deontay Wilder! Now if we can only get Fury in the ring with Anthony Joshua. I enjoyed the article on heavyweight rematches. My question is: How can you say the Gene Tunney vs. Jack Dempsey rematch of 1927 was Fight of the Year when The Ring didn't choose Fight of the Year until 1945? Was it the Boxing Writers award instead?

Wise E. Gardner II
Hampton, Va.

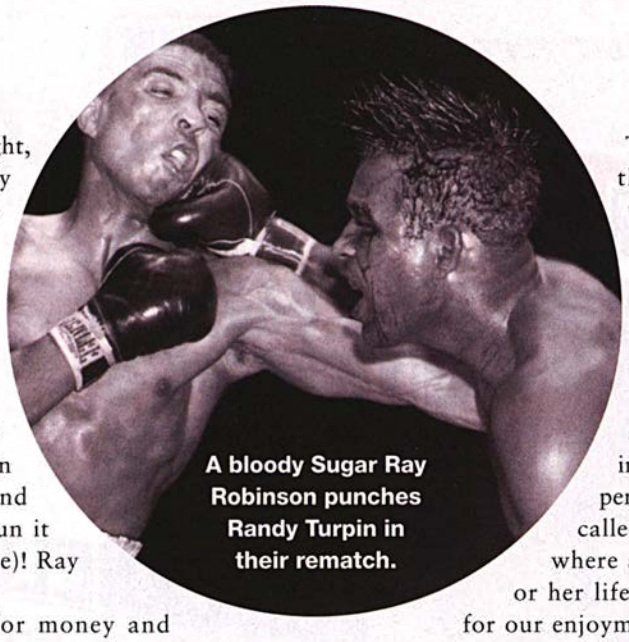
EDITOR'S RESPONSE: The Tunney-Dempsey rematch, a monumental sporting event for the time, which attracted more than 100,000 fans to Soldier Field in Chicago and set a gate record that stood for 50 years, was unanimously lauded as the 1927 "fight of the year" by sports writers and the newly formed Boxing Writers Association of Greater New York (which would later become the Boxing Writers Association of America), as well as The Ring Magazine, even though it would be decades before either organization would present an official award for that honor. You are correct that The Ring began naming official Fight of the Year award-winners in 1945 (with Rocky Graziano's stirring 10th-round KO of Freddie Cochrane).

OVER"RAY"TED

I've been a regular reader of The Ring since 1946. Started reading it when I was age 9.

It is sad and tragic that Wilder had to "pay" during his rematch with Fury for the dirty-rotten deal that Sugar Ray Robinson and the USA boxing commissions did to Randy Turpin during the 1951-52 era. I had pulled for Wilder, however I am thrilled that Fury got revenge for Randy after 68 year have passed.

Ray should have been forced by these commissions in



A bloody Sugar Ray Robinson punches Randy Turpin in their rematch.

1952 to give Randy a third fight, but "they" all knew (especially Robinson) that Randy had his number. Randy was beating Ray again in that September 12, 1951, New York fight, but Ray's own referee, Ruby Goldstein, was right there for him! I have a movie of that bout – Ray did not knock Randy down; he threw Turpin down, not with any right hand (look at the movie, slowly; run it back and forth and you will see)! Ray should have been disqualified!

Ray was always hungry for money and he would have made a pile in a third bout with Randy. However, he chose to get easier pickings with Bobo Olson and Rocky Graziano ... then "retired" to avoid Turpin! Randy was the best of these two!

Unfortunately, Randy was obviously spiritually weak, so I believe that the runaround he got in the above years broke his heart, which led to his tragic ending.

Robinson was not the all-time boxing great! He refused to fight Gene Fullmer after their second bout. Gene only lost once in their four bouts! Ray also absolutely refused to fight Basilio (who was half his size) the third time! He knew he would lose.

Also remember Joey Maxim had a great manager in ole "Doc" (Jack Kearns). They had Ray run all over the ring 'till he tired, then Joey put on the pressure, and look what happened to Ray in Round 13! For greatness, take a good look at the likes of Joe Louis, Willie Pep, Archie Moore ... they dodged no one!

Thank you for 74 years of great reading.

Harry Rusk
Carrot Creek, Alberta, Canada

HOLD THE RANT

I would second last month's questioning (by reader Mr. Gampel in "Come Out Writing") of dropping Deontay Wilder below Dillian Whyte, but more pointedly express surprise at the genuinely unprofessional and openly disrespectful editorial "rant" from Editor-in-Chief Mr. Fischer. Not only was it disrespectful to the reader, but also to the fighter in question. Mr. Gampel asked what seems to me to be a legitimate question: Why drop Wilder below Whyte? He didn't expand on that question, but instead seems to have tried to spice up the question with a hypothetical directed to the editors – who they would pick in a Wilder-Whyte fight – as illustrative of what he clearly sees as the problem (if you pick Wilder, then Whyte oughtn't be rated above him). While it may not stand alone, who would win head-to-head between ranked fighters is the essence of a ranking inquiry.

The fighters we follow risk their lives and as long as they don't exhibit open cowardice, they deserve not to be insulted. Where, for example, a fighter quits, clearly fakes an injury, makes no effort to make weight, obviously overplays a marginal low blow or fouls incessantly by design or habit, perhaps he or she deserves to be called out more aggressively. But where a fighter shows up, puts his or her life on the line for money and for our enjoyment, the effort ought not be belittled for the sake of any editor's (even the Editor-in-Chief's) defense of what I can only guess is a much-questioned ranking.

You get to make the rankings. We get it. Don't insult your readership or the fighters to defend your choices. Justify them? Fine. Even good. But the old adage "methinks he dost protest too much" distinctly applies here.

Trent D. Miller
Bradenton, Fl.

One type of boxing remains available, even when gyms are closed for quarantine:

SHADOW BOXING

By Jeremy Friedman

Anywhere there is light, anytime
Black silhouette, shadow boxing
No bleeding
No equipment needed

In solitude fists hitting air
Dodging imaginary punches
Watching shadow for flaws in form
Feeling fatigue heavy breathing

Uppercuts, hook,
Jabs, left-right combos
Crouch down in defense
Stay loose, head bobs and weaves

Caution on the street
Here alone attack, attack
Me against me
My shadow always fights back

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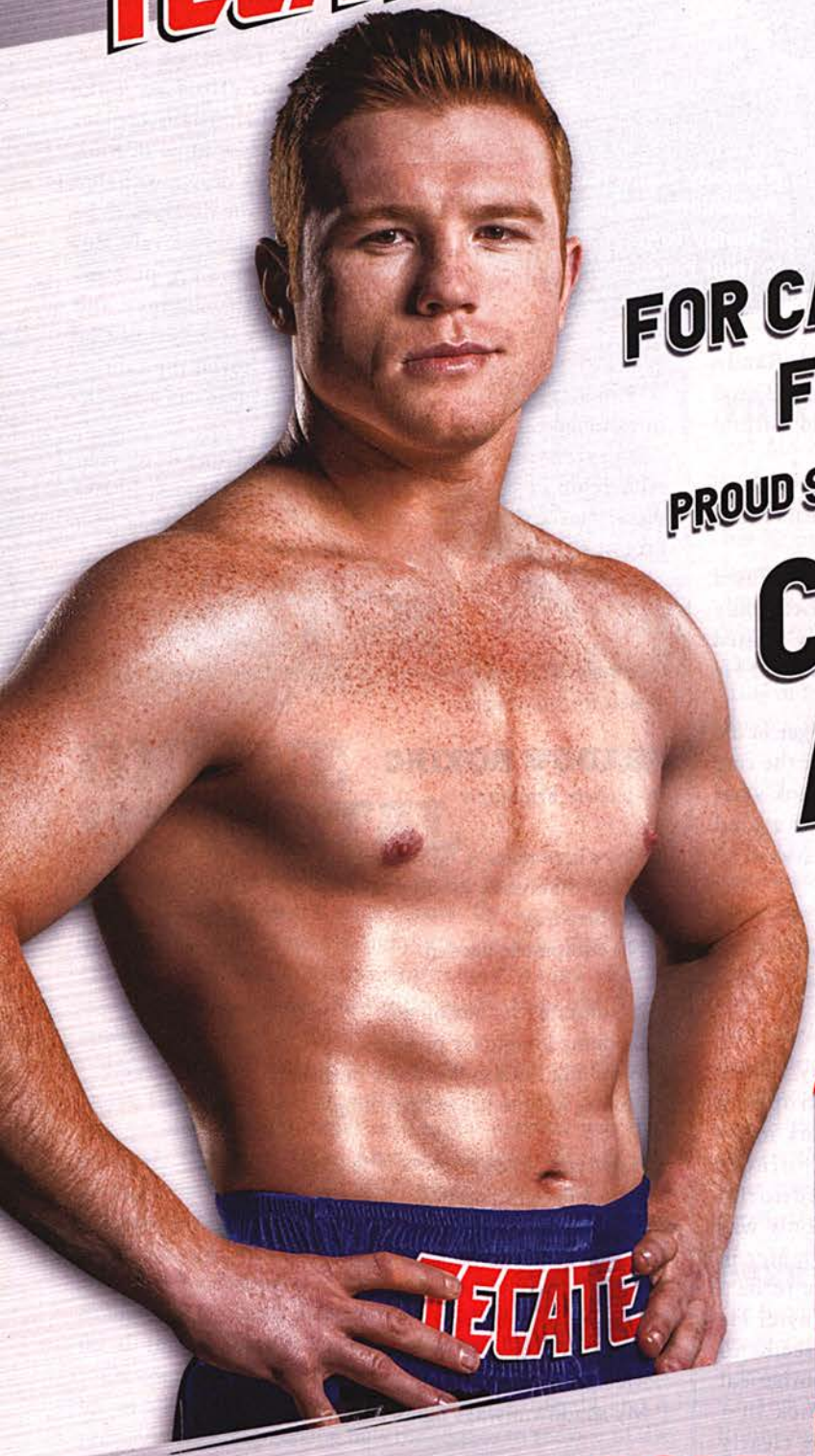

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RINGSIDE BY TYSON FURY

COVID-19: A NEW KIND OF FIGHT FOR A FIGHTING MAN

My mindset right now with what's going on in the world is to take one day at a time and hope for the best. I'm obeying the laws of the land, staying away from everybody and everything, and I'm focused on staying healthy and well. Right now, it's just about doing what we're told.

Fury's focus has gone from boxing to health during the pandemic.

We need to be strong, because this is something that we're *all* forced to live with – it's something that we're *all* going through. Our generation has

never been to war, so we've never known anything quite like this, but we have to do the best we can and get ourselves through it. It won't be forever, it will get better, and we just need to hold tight and stay healthy.

I'm no better and no worse than anyone else when it comes to this virus. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was in intensive care, so no one is untouchable. I'm just a man, and I struggle with mental health problems on a day-to-day basis. We need to do our best to stay alive and that's the most important thing – nothing else matters.

My family is in a routine. I'm doing a workout on Instagram at 9 o'clock every morning, then we'll have breakfast, then everybody helps around the house, then we'll watch some TV. I also train twice a day, and that keeps me pretty occupied. My wife, Paris, helps the kids with their homework, the kids eat, they play in the garden, come in, eat again.

In a way, it's like training camp for me. In training camp, I just stay in the house and I only go out when I need to train – that's it. This is pretty much the same: I'm training in the morning, I'm training in the evening and I'm eating in between. Oh, and I might have a shave now again. Seriously, though, I focus on taking a positive out of every negative, and the positive here is that I get to spend time with my family.

I'll tell you what has changed for me, personally. I'd usually be getting tortured right now. The first two weeks after the Deontay Wilder rematch were absolutely horrendous. There was people at my door every 10 seconds, trying to get in. I was living like a prisoner, and I couldn't go out the door anyway. I was getting maybe 150 people a day coming to the house, ringing the intercom. This COVID-19 thing has stopped all that, because this is bigger than boxing – it's bigger than anything.

When it comes to the sport, I'm in a much better place. When I beat Wladimir Klitschko, I'd achieved what I set out to achieve and there was nothing more to prove. I didn't want to be in boxing, defending titles – I had no interest in it. I went away, had time out of the ring, ballooned up in weight and then I came back. I always need a challenge. After I beat Klitschko, there was no challenge. The

Wilder-Fury 2 was the last big boxing event before COVID-19 cleared the schedule.

real challenge for me was taking all the weight off and coming back from the brink to beat someone that nobody thought I could beat. And what happened? I beat Wilder easily because I raise my game for different challenges.

The way things are now with my career, I've created it myself. Before I wasn't interested in being alive, and when you lose the love for living, you're in a pretty horrible place. Right now, boxing is my job, it's nothing more, nothing less. I do my job, get paid, come home, stay in shape and spend the rest of my time with my family. I also have the support of the fans now and I'm very grateful for that. Thousands travelled over to Las Vegas to support me and have a good weekend, and I'm happy to be in a position to put on great nights and give people entertainment. I've worked hard in boxing, dedicated my whole life to it from a little boy to right now at 31 years of age. Whoever is willing to sacrifice in life will get the rewards. You might not become heavyweight champion of the world, but if you put the same amount of time into anything that I have into boxing, you can definitely be successful.

There's not much more I can achieve in this sport, but if you don't give yourself goals, you'll always stay in the same position and have the same mindset. That wouldn't be healthy in my early 30s. With that said, I don't have any major ambitions, and I don't want to become a promoter or anything like that. I haven't really thought about what I'll do when my boxing career is over.

In the more immediate future, I'll be motivated for that third fight with Deontay Wilder because it's my job. I know the danger in Wilder's hands, and I know taking it lightly will get me knocked out. If I want to continue in this job, then I must sacrifice and dedicate myself. But right at this moment, I'm not focused on boxing. I'm just focused on staying alive and keeping my family safe. Sports, business and money are the last things that anyone should be caring about right now. RING

ABRAHAM LOPEZ

Lopez intends to return to boxing, but for now his other career is more important.

Abraham Lopez last stepped into the prize ring three years ago, but the 32-year-old is deep into the most important fight of his professional life. Lopez works as a respiratory therapist at Olympia Medical Center in Los Angeles, helping stabilize patients with breathing issues.

The work took on a new purpose when he found himself on the front lines of the coronavirus pandemic. Now his job requires wearing full protective clothing, from a mask and hood on down to booties to cover his shoes, as he administers oxygen and operates life-saving ventilators for patients suffering from COVID-19. He is always on guard, as any patient could potentially be a carrier for the deadly virus.

"I don't fear going into the ring, because I prepare for it. But at work, you can prepare so much and you never know," said Lopez, a La Puente, California, resident with a 23-1-1 (16 KOs) pro record.

Lopez takes special precautions each day after his 12-hour shift ends, wiping down his phone, keys and backpack with antibacterial wipes, washing his hands and face and changing his clothes in the garage before entering his house. Healthcare workers have been among the hardest hit by the coronavirus, and he worries about bringing the virus home.

"I'm very concerned because I'm putting my health on the line. We sometimes don't have the resources to protect ourselves," said Lopez. "It's a scary situation because we're in need of masks, gowns, gloves, antibacterial hand sanitizer."

Lopez hasn't fought since his 2017 stoppage win over Isao Gonzalo Carranza, but he says he has been staying in shape at his home gym and plans on resuming his career at 130 or 135 pounds. Until then, Lopez is doing battle with an enemy that cannot be seen, but whose insidious impact is felt worldwide.

"I look forward to going to work all the time. But now I know what I'm getting myself into," said Lopez. "I took that oath; it's something I need to do. I gotta man up in the time of need."

NEW FACES

ARSLANBEK MAKHMUDOV

By **Anson Wainwright**

Age: 30
Born: Mozdok, Russia
Hometown: Montreal, Canada
Weight class: heavyweight
Height: 6-foot-5½
Amateur record: 90-10
Turned pro: 2017
Pro record: 10-0 (10 KOs)
Trainer: Marc Ramsay
Manager: Camille Estephan
Promoter: Eye of the Tiger Management and Golden Boy Promotions
Instagram: @arslanbek_mahmudov

BEST NIGHT OF PRO CAREER AND WHY: Makhmudov impressively stopped former WBC heavyweight titleholder Samuel Peter in one round last December.

"The Lion" hurt Peter and dropped him midway through the round. Although Peter bravely got to his feet, Makhmudov quickly blasted the Nigerian with a big right hand that caused him to stumble into his corner, prompting the referee to stop the bout.

"It was a very important fight for me," Makhmudov told The Ring. "We took the camp very seriously with Joey Dawejko and Oscar Rivas as sparring partners. I was very well-prepared.

"Peter was a big name and he tried to surprise me. I controlled every second of the fight and knocked him out. It was a great feeling to fight in front of a large crowd at the Bell Centre – I could feel the love of the fans."

WORST NIGHT OF PRO CAREER AND WHY: The big Russian is unhappy with his performance against Julian Fernandez last September.

"I didn't really show what we've been working on at the gym technically," he said.

Despite the self-criticism, it was by no means a failure. Makhmudov trapped Fernandez on the ropes and teed off on him until the referee halted proceedings in the third round.

NEXT FIGHT: In mid-March, Eye of the Tiger entered into a co-promotional deal with Golden Boy Promotions. It is hoped that once the COVID-19 pandemic has cleared up, Makhmudov will make his U.S. debut under the Golden Boy banner.

WHY HE'S A PROSPECT: Makhmudov was a good amateur; he was the Russian national champion in his age group (19-22) in 2010. More recently, he was also the No. 1-rated super heavyweight in the World Series of Boxing in the 2014-2015 season. He holds wins over amateur stalwarts Mahammadrasul Majidov, Erik Pfeifer and Mihai Nistor.

Makhmudov had aspirations of going to the Olympics and World Championships but saw those dreams dissipate.

"To go to these championships, generally you need financial backing, and I didn't want to play politics," he explained.

It didn't take long for word to get out that Makhmudov had moved to Canada in the fall of 2017.

"I was notified by my general manager that Arslan was being trained by Marc Ramsay and he is an extremely special talent," said Camille Estephan. "I believe after discussions that Arslan had with his friend (IBF and WBC light heavyweight beltholder) Artur Beterbiev, he was advised by Artur to look into signing with us. So we got a great referral, which I'm very happy about.

"I think from the talent and abilities perspective, he's already there. He will certainly be a player in the heavyweight division, and I believe he has a chance to be on top for many years to come."

The physically imposing Makhmudov is heavy-handed, possesses good technique and is a driven fighter, illustrated by the manner in which he has breezed past his first 10 opponents in just 19 rounds.

WHY HE'S A SUSPECT: Makhmudov, who is already 30, is beginning his pro career at an advanced age. While 30 isn't "old" by heavyweight standards, the next year is a pivotal one for the Russian.

His team feels he needs three or four more fights to get accustomed to "the big lights and shows" before he can fight for the world title. Makhmudov will need much stronger opposition than he's had in his first 10 bouts to reach this goal. Although Peter is a former world titleholder, the Nigerian was far removed from his prime.

He would be well-served facing solid gatekeepers like Carlos Takam or Robert Helenius or possibly someone like ex-titleholder Charles Martin. If he can pass that sort of test, he can zero in on a title shot.

Makhmudov has had things his own way so far. What happens when he faces some adversity? Can he take a big punch? Can he get up if he's dropped? How will he respond when an opponent puts it on him?

STORYLINES: Makhmudov was born in a small town in southern Russia, near the Georgian border.

"During the Soviet Union, my father was a bus driver and my mother was a teacher," he said. "After the Soviet Union collapsed, they opened a store, their own business. Now they are retired and I work, knocking heavyweights out."

As a youngster, Makhmudov often fought on the streets. When he was 9 years old, his uncle took him to the local boxing gym to learn discipline and keep away from trouble.

Makmudov vividly remembers the journey that forever changed his path in life.

"In the car ride going home with my uncle, he told me one day I'd be a big star like Muhammad Ali and Mike Tyson," he said. "That motivated me. That conversation made me focus, and I was dedicated in the gym to follow that dream."

Questions and/or comments can be sent to Anson at elraincoat@live.co.uk and you can follow him on Twitter @AnsonWainwright.

Makhmudov has potential, but he must be moved fast.

VINCENT ETHIER-EYE OF THE TIGER MANAGEMENT

JABS AND STRAIGHT WRITES

BY THOMAS HAUSER

HOUSE OF BOXING

Only a few boxing gyms have names that resonate, and most of them exist only in memory. Gleason's Gym is alive and thriving.

Gleason's was founded in 1937 by a fighter named Peter Robert Gagliardi, who changed his name to Bobby Gleason for marketing purposes and opened a gym on Westchester Avenue in the Bronx. Dues were two dollars a month. In 1974, he moved the gym to Eighth Avenue and 30th Street in Manhattan, a short walk from Madison Square Garden.

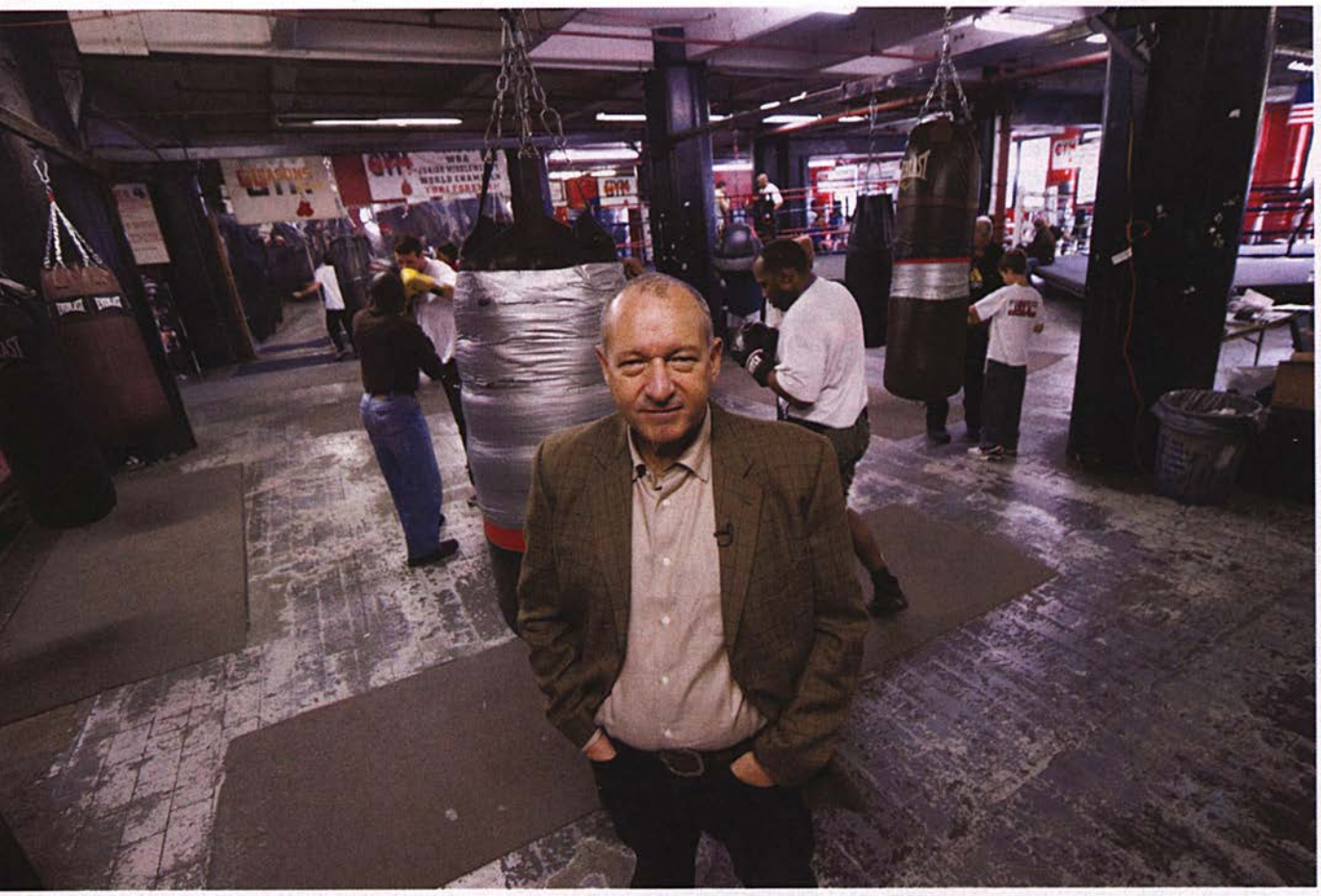
In 1981, Gleason's was sold to Ira Becker. Two years later, Becker brought Bruce Silverglade in as his partner. In 1986, they relocated the gym to the second floor of a shabby industrial building in the shadow of the Brooklyn Bridge. When Becker died in 1994, Silverglade took control of the business. Three years ago, Gleason's moved yet again, this time to its current location at 130 Water Street in Brooklyn.

The ghosts travel with the name.

Phil Terranova, who won the world featherweight title in 1943, was the first champion to come out of Gleason's. Jake LaMotta was the second. Since then, the gym has hosted well over a hundred world champions, including 15 claimants to the heavyweight throne. Some made Gleason's their home. Others were just passing through.

Legendary champions who

Legends trained at Gleason's, but the gym remains relevant due to everyday people of all ages who want to learn the Sweet Science.



Bruce Silverglade and the gym as it looked in 2012.

have laced up their gloves in Gleason's over the decades include Muhammad Ali, Joe Frazier, Sonny Liston, George Foreman, Larry Holmes, Mike Tyson, Riddick Bowe, Floyd Patterson, Ingemar Johansson, Marvelous Marvin Hagler, Sugar Ray Leonard, Thomas Hearns, Roberto Duran, Michael Spinks, Roy Jones, Emile Griffith, Carmen Basilio, Dick Tiger, Carlos Monzon, Pernell Whitaker, Aaron Pryor, Carlos Ortiz, Sandy Saddler, Alexis Arguello, Wilfredo Gomez, Julio Cesar Chavez and Barry McGuigan. That's quite a group.

Gleason's opens on weekdays at 5 a.m. and stays open until 10 o'clock at night. The hours on Saturday and Sunday are 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Silverglade, now 73, opens the gym on weekdays and stays until early evening. It's not uncommon for a fighter to be sitting on the stoop when Bruce arrives at five o'clock in the morning. An hour later, a dozen or more people are on the floor. Silverglade is also on-site for much of the weekend. "I love running the gym," he says. "Every day is different here."

Boxing is in Silverglade's blood. His father, a New York City cop, was one of the founders of the National Police Athletic League and served as team manager for the 1980 and 1984 U.S. Olympic teams. Bruce is universally respected within the boxing community. He's a well-liked "boxing guy."

Gleason's has about 1,200 members who come from all parts of the New York metropolitan area. The monthly membership fee is $99 ($149 if the member wants a permanent locker). There's a $20 discount for registered amateurs. Those who are so inclined can sign up on a weekly basis ($50) or for one day ($20).

The concrete floor covers 13,600 square feet (including locker rooms and several small office cubicles). There are four boxing rings and one more that's suited for wrestling. Also heavy bags, speed bags, double-end bags, treadmills, stationary bikes and elliptical machines. The red walls are covered with posters and photographs.

Ninety-two trainers are allowed to ply their trade in the gym.

The roster of current members includes 70 professional boxers (55 men and 15 women).

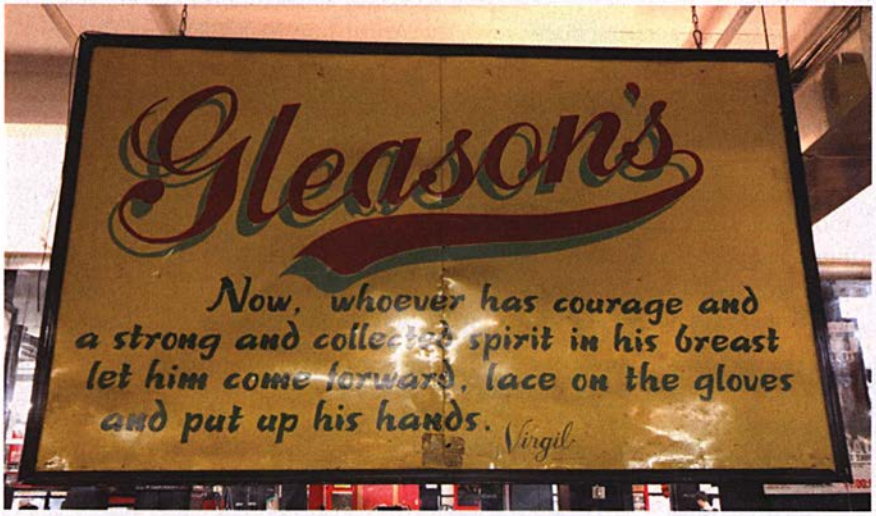
Overall, a third of Gleason's clientele are women.

"A few MMA fighters come here to work on their punching, but we're really not an MMA gym," Silverglade says. "I had a cage at the old location for six or seven months, but it didn't attract much business, so I got rid of it."

As a small-business owner in a

unique small business, Silverglade relies on various income streams to make ends meet. The gym has been home to weddings and bar mitzvahs. There are instructional clinics and occasional amateur fight cards. Tourists pay a 10-dollar spectator fee.

Film crews love the location. More than a few big-name actors have prepped for roles at Gleason's. Robert De Niro (*Raging Bull*) and Hilary Swank (*Million Dollar Baby*) won Academy Awards after training there. Wesley Snipes (*Streets of Gold*), Jennifer Lopez (*Money Train*), John Leguizamo (*Undefeated*) and Craig Bierko (*Cinderella Man*) also learned the rudiments of boxing at Gleason's.



This sign has been part of the gym since its Manhattan location.

About half of the gym's members are businessmen. Silverglade is candid in acknowledging, "The gym survives because of white-collar boxing."

Then he makes a point that means a lot to him.

"Gleason's is a true melting pot," he says. "The mix of people here is staggering. Professional boxers, raw amateurs, street kids, scared women, white-collar boxers. There's a niche for everyone at Gleason's."

Visitors to the previous incarnation of Gleason's were greeted by a huge sign inscribed with a quote from the Aenead that read, "Now, whoever has courage and a strong and collected spirit in his breast, let him come forward, lace on the gloves, and put up his hands."

That sign now hangs in today's Gleason's Gym in front of a mirrored wall.

Reece Chapman is 11 years old and in fifth grade at Kessler Elementary School in Helena, Montana. He watches fights on television with his father and says "they're fun to watch" but adds, "Boxing against someone who hits hard probably isn't much fun."

Recently, Reece visited Gleason's Gym with ring announcer David Diamante. Reece thinks that Diamante is "definitely cool." He was captivated by David's dreadlocks and loved his greeting when they met: "Hey, Reece! What's up, dude?" He also likes the fact that David rides around on a motorcycle.

The sounds of boxing filled the air. Gloves thudding into heavy bags; the grunting that accompanies punches thrown; a buzzer at regular intervals simulating three-minute rounds and the one-minute rest period in between.

Reece moved around the gym, stopping at the edge of a ring to watch two heavyweights who were sparring. His eyes opened wide.

Hector Roca, Joan Guzman and Heather Hardy passed by and said hello.

Sonya Lamonakis, who won four New York metropolitan area Golden Gloves championships while teaching sixth grade at a public school in Harlem, asked, "Do you like school?"

"Yes," Reece told her.

"Good answer," Lamonakis countered.

Like most people, Reece had never been in a boxing ring. Silverglade asked if he'd like to get in one to see what it's like and handed him a pair of gloves for a photo op.

Reece put the gloves on and got in the ring. The next thing he knew, P.J. Lawson (a former amateur standout and now a certified USA Boxing trainer) was showing him the rudiments of how to bob, weave and punch.

Reece was all smiles when he left the gym.

"What did you learn?" he was asked.

"I learned some things about boxing and the way people treat each other in the gym."

"People are here because they want to be here," Silverglade had told him. "And everyone treats everyone with respect. A boxing gym brings out the best in people."

Thomas Hauser's email address is thomashauserwriter@gmail.com. His most recent book – A Dangerous Journey: Another Year Inside Boxing – *was published by the University of Arkansas Press. In 2004, the Boxing Writers Association of America honored him with the Nat Fleischer Award for career excellence in boxing journalism. Hauser will be inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame with the Class of 2020.*

THE FACE OF BOXING

AND THE AWARD FOR BEST TATTOO GOES TO . . .

PHOTOGRAPHS BY **WOJTEK URBANEK**
TEXT BY **THOMAS HAUSER**

The most famous tattoo in boxing is visible for all the world to see on Mike Tyson's face. But a strong argument can be made that the most impressive tattoo in boxing is emblazoned across Regis Prograis' chest.

Prograis was born and raised in New Orleans. On August 29, 2005, when Regis was 16, Hurricane Katrina devastated the city and forced him to relocate out of state. But his love for The Big Easy remains.

The tattoo recreates the skyline of downtown New Orleans. Prograis was 19 when he got it. Most of the work was done by a tattoo artist named Marlon who works out of Triple Threat Tattoos in Slidell, Louisiana.

"This was an amazing night for me," Wojtek Urbanek says of photographing Prograis. "Early in the evening, I photographed Ray Leonard. That was a real honor. Then, near the end of the evening, I took some portraits of Regis. When I finished, he asked if he could be photographed with Ray. So Ray came back and Regis opened his shirt a bit to say hello to New Orleans. After that, I said, 'Let's go for it all.'

"As a portrait photographer, I always look first at the face," Urbanek continues. "But when Regis opened his shirt to show the whole tattoo ... WOW! ... I felt like I was looking at a cityscape."

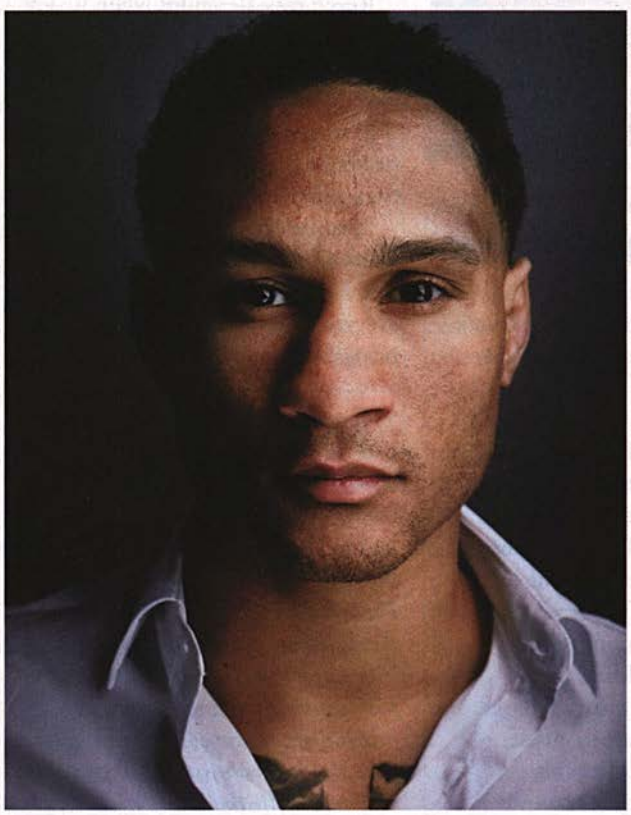
"Old-school people don't like the tattoo," Prograis acknowledges. "My daddy doesn't like it. But for me, it's artwork and self-expression. I like it a lot. I have a bunch more, but this is the tattoo that people talk about."

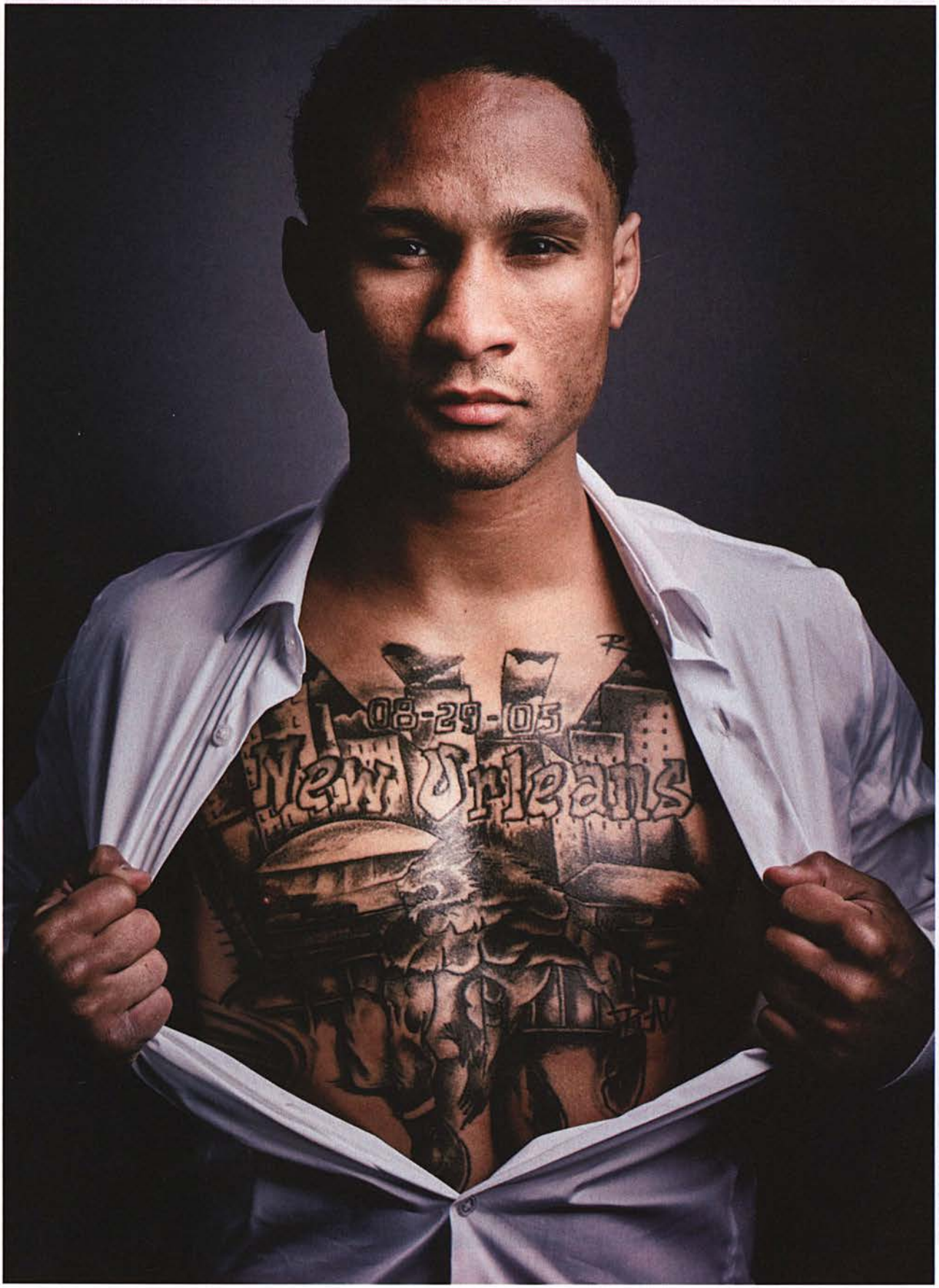
And what about those other tattoos?

"My favorite is of Muhammad Ali," Regis says. "I'm thinking about getting a whole sleeve and adding Joe Louis, Sugar Ray Robinson, Henry Armstrong, Jack Johnson, a lot of great fighters. Probably I'd need both arms to do it."

And what about the possibility that, someday, a young fighter will walk into a boxing ring adorned with a tattoo of Regis Prograis?

"That would be nice," Regis answers. "But I've got a lot of work to do before that happens."

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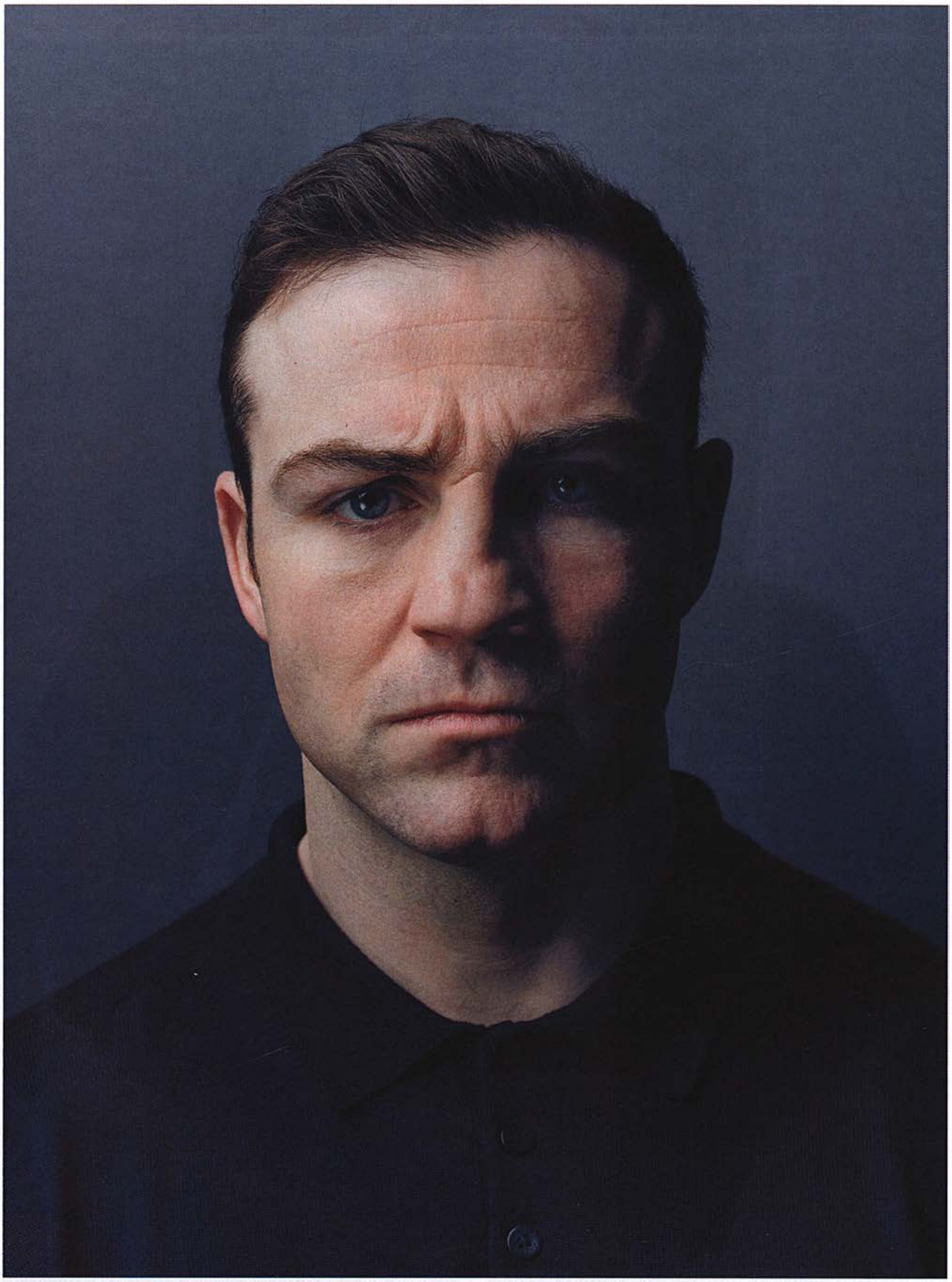


MATTHEW MACKLIN

THEY WERE CONTENDERS

More than six decades have passed since Marlon Brando uttered Budd Schulberg's immortal words: "I coulda been a contender."

The men on these pages were contenders.

Matthew Macklin came closest to winning a world title. On June 25, 2011, he journeyed to Cologne and challenged Felix Sturm for the WBA 160-pound belt. Macklin clearly outboxed Sturm and got the nod 115-113 on one of the judges' scorecards. But the other two arbiters opted for German home cooking.

Eight years later, Maciej Sulecki entered the lion's den in Providence, Rhode Island, to challenge WBO middleweight beltholder Demetrius Andrade. No hometown cooking was necessary here. Andrade won all 12 rounds on each judge's scorecard.

John Duddy never had the opportunity to fight for a world title. He won his first 26 fights and was a popular ticket-seller. But questionable decision-making by his first managerial team cost him the chance to challenge for a championship. Like Macklin, Duddy is long retired from boxing.

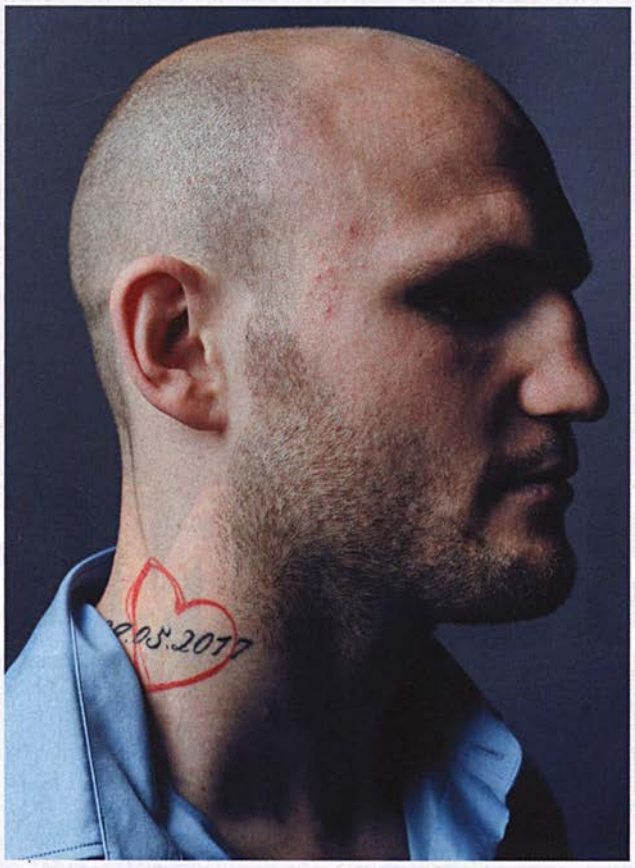
"It's never the same when I photograph different people," Wojtek Urbanek says. "Each experience turns into something different."

"Macklin came in smiling. He looked more like a journalist than a fighter. Then I asked for a staredown, and everything about his mood changed.

"With Sulecki, both of us are from Poland and we started speaking Polish immediately. He was in New York to fight Danny Jacobs. But we didn't talk about boxing. He was very into history, and that's what we wound up talking about.

"Photographing John Duddy was like photographing a model or actor for GQ. That's how much good looks and charisma John has. The day we met, we went to an Irish bar and joked about a Pole and an Irishman each ordering a German beer. Since then, we've become friends. He's such a great guy. I would be proud if John was one of my brothers." RING

Wojtek Urbanek is based in New York and can be reached at studio@wojtekurbanek.com. Thomas Hauser's email address is thomashauserwriter@gmail.com.



MACIEJ SULECKI

JOHN DUDDY

Pictured left to right: Shane Mosley Jr., Fernando "El Feroz" Vargas, Diego Magdaleno

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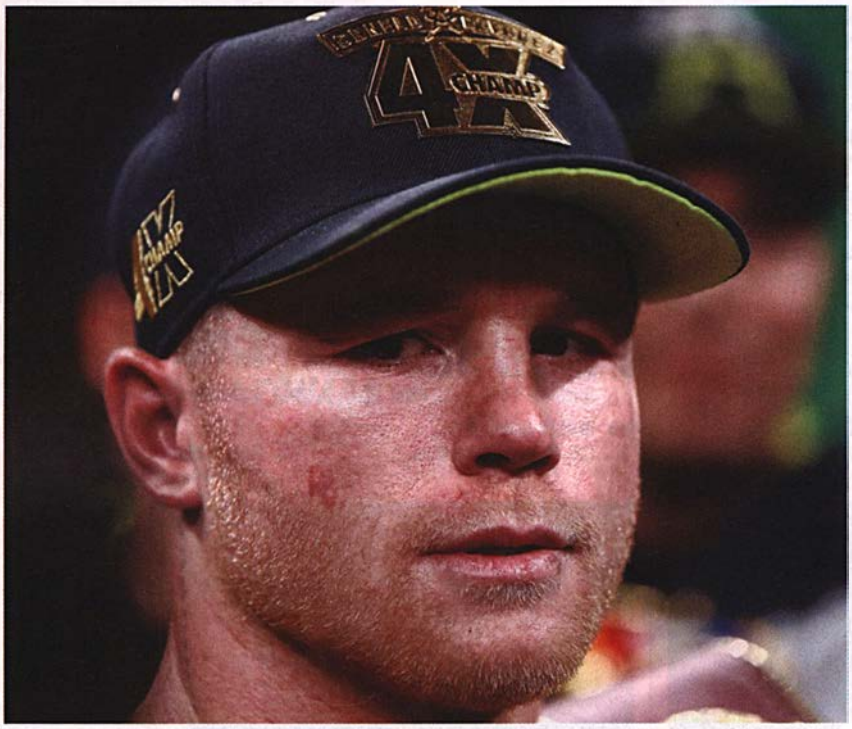
RATINGS

The Ring Ratings through fights of April 18, 2020



Canelo Alvarez is still the man atop the pound-for-pound rankings, still the middleweight champ and still a player in the 168-pound division.

1 **CANELO ALVAREZ**
Mexico • 53-1-2 (36 KOs)

2 **VASILIY LOMACHENKO**
Ukraine • 14-1-0 (10 KOs)

3 **NAOYA INOUE**
Japan • 19-0-0 (16 KOs)

4 **TERENCE CRAWFORD**
U.S. • 36-0-0 (27 KOs)

5 **ALEKSANDR USYK**
Ukraine • 17-0-0 (13 KOs)

6 **ERROL SPENCE JR.**
U.S. • 26-0-0 (21 KOs)

7 **GENNADIY GOLOVKIN**
Kazakhstan • 40-1-1 (35 KOs)

8 **JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA**
Mexico • 40-3-0 (27 KOs)

9 **ARTUR BETERBIEV**
Russia • 15-0-0 (15 KOs)

10 **MANNY PACQUIAO**
Philippines • 62-7-2 (39 KOs)

HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT UNLIMITED

C **TYSON FURY** RING, WBC
U.K. • 30-0-1 (21 KOs)

1 **ANTHONY JOSHUA** IBF, WBA, WBO
U.K. • 23-1-0 (21 KOs)

2 **DILLIAN WHYTE**
U.K. • 27-1-0 (18 KOs)

3 **DEONTAY WILDER**
U.S. • 42-1-1 (41 KOs)

4 **LUIS ORTIZ**
Cuba • 31-2-0 (26 KOs)

5 **ANDY RUIZ JR.**
U.S. • 33-2-0 (22 KOs)

6 **ALEXANDER POVETKIN**
Russia • 35-2-1 (24 KOs)

7 **JOSEPH PARKER**
New Zealand • 27-2-0 (21 KOs)

8 **MICHAEL HUNTER**
U.S. • 18-1-1 (12 KOs)

9 **OSCAR RIVAS**
Colombia • 26-1-0 (18 KOs)

10 **KUBRAT PULEV**
Bulgaria • 28-1-0 (14 KOs)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 200 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**

1 **MAIRIS BRIEDIS**
Latvia • 26-1-0 (19 KOs)

2 **YUNIEL DORTICOS** IBF
Cuba • 24-1-0 (22 KOs)

3 **ILUNGA MAKABU** WBC
Congo • 27-2-0 (24 KOs)

4 **KRZYSZTOF GLOWACKI**
Poland • 31-2-0 (19 KOs)

5 **KEVIN LERENA**
S. Africa • 25-1-0 (12 KOs)

6 **ANDREW TABITI**
U.S. • 17-1-0 (13 KOs)

7 **LAWRENCE OKOLIE**
U.K. • 14-0-0 (11 KOs)

8 **ARSEN GOULAMIRIAN** WBA
France • 26-0-0 (18 KOs)

9 **THABISO MCHUNU**
S. Africa • 22-5-0 (13 KOs)

10 **MICHAL CIESLAK**
Poland • 19-1-0 (13 KOs)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 175 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**

1 **ARTUR BETERBIEV** IBF, WBC
Russia • 15-0-0 (15 KOs)

2 **OLEKSANDR GVOZDYK**
Ukraine • 17-1-0 (14 KOs)

3 **DMITRY BIVOL** WBA
Russia • 17-0-0 (11 KOs)

4 **SERGEY KOVALEV**
Russia • 34-4-1 (29 KOs)

5 **ELEIDER ALVAREZ**
Colombia • 25-1-0 (13 KOs)

6 **JEAN PASCAL**
Canada • 35-6-1 (20 KOs)

7 **BADOU JACK**
Sweden • 22-3-3 (13 KOs)

8 **MARCUS BROWNE**
U.S. • 23-1-0 (16 KOs)

9 **JOE SMITH JR.**
U.S. • 25-3-0 (20 KOs)

10 **DOMINIC BOESEL**
Germany • 30-1-0 (12 KOs)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 168 POUNDS

C **CALLUM SMITH** RING, WBA
U.K. • 27-0-0 (19 KOs)

1 **DAVID BENAVIDEZ** WBC
U.S. • 22-0-0 (19 KOs)

2 **CALEB PLANT** IBF
U.S. • 20-0-0 (12 KOs)

3 **ANTHONY DIRRELL**
U.S. • 33-2-1 (24 KOs)

4 **CANELO ALVAREZ**
Mexico • 53-1-2 (36 KOs)

5 **BILLY JOE SAUNDERS** WBO
U.K. • 29-0-0 (14 KOs)

6 **CALEB TRUAX**
U.S. • 31-4-2 (19 KOs)

7 **JOHN RYDER**
U.K. • 28-5-0 (16 KOs)

8 **FEDOR CHUDINOV**
Russia • 22-2-0 (15 KOs)

9 **DAVID LEMIEUX**
Canada • 41-4-0 (34 KOs)

10 **DANIEL JACOBS**
U.S. • 36-3-0 (30 KOs)

RATINGS

Through fights of April 18, 2020

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 160 POUNDS

- **C** **CANELO ALVAREZ** RING, WBA — Mexico • 53-1-2 (36 KOs)
- **1** **GENNADIY GOLOVKIN** IBF — Kaz. • 40-1-1 (35 KOs)
- **2** **DEMETRIUS ANDRADE** WBO — U.S. • 29-0-0 (18 KOs)
- **3** **JERMALL CHARLO** WBC — U.S. • 30-0-0 (22 KOs)
- **4** **SERGIY DEREVYANCHENKO** — Ukraine • 13-2-0 (10 KOs)
- **5** **RYOTA MURATA** — Japan • 16-2-0 (13 KOs)
- **6** **KAMIL SZEREMETA** — Poland • 21-0-0 (5 KOs)
- **7** **CHRIS EUBANK JR.** — U.K. • 29-2-0 (22 KOs)
- **8** **MACIEJ SULECKI** — Poland • 28-2-0 (11 KOs)
- **9** **ROB BRANT** — U.S. • 25-2-0 (17 KOs)
- **10** **LIAM WILLIAMS** — U.K. • 22-2-1 (17 KOs)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 154 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **JERMELL CHARLO** WBC — U.S. • 33-1-0 (17 KOs)
- **2** **JEISON ROSARIO** IBF, WBA — Dom. Rep. • 20-1-1 (14 KOs)
- **3** **JULIAN WILLIAMS** — U.S. • 27-2-1 (16 KOs)
- **4** **JARRETT HURD** — U.S. • 24-1-0 (16 KOs)
- **5** **ERISLANDY LARA** — Cuba • 26-3-3 (15 KOs)
- **6** **BRIAN CASTANO** — Argentina • 16-0-1 (12 KOs)
- **7** **TONY HARRISON** — U.S. • 28-3-0 (21 KOs)
- **8** **MICHEL SORO** — France • 35-2-1 (24 KOs)
- **9** **ERICKSON LUBIN** — U.S. • 22-1-0 (16 KOs)
- **10** **PATRICK TEIXEIRA** WBO — Brazil • 31-1-0 (22 KOs)

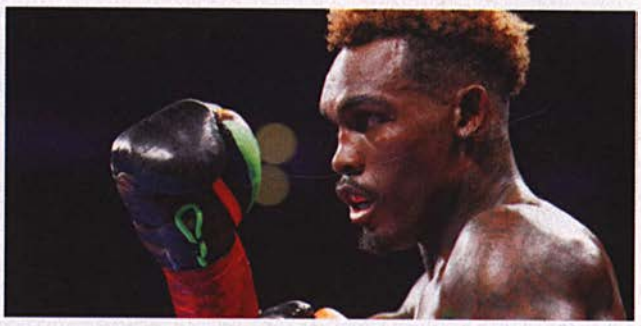
WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 147 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **ERROL SPENCE JR.** IBF, WBC — U.S. • 26-0-0 (21 KOs)
- **2** **TERENCE CRAWFORD** WBO — U.S. • 36-0-0 (27 KOs)
- **3** **MANNY PACQUIAO** WBA — Phil. • 62-7-2 (39 KOs)
- **4** **KEITH THURMAN** — U.S. • 29-1-0 (22 KOs)
- **5** **SHAWN PORTER** — U.S. • 30-3-1 (17 KOs)
- **6** **DANNY GARCIA** — U.S. • 36-2-0 (21 KOs)
- **7** **YORDENIS UGAS** — Cuba • 25-4-0 (12 KOs)
- **8** **KUDRATILLO ABDUKAKHOROV** — Uzbekistan • 17-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **9** **SERGEY LIPINETS** — Russia • 16-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **10** **MIKEY GARCIA** — U.S. • 40-1-0 (30 KOs)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 140 POUNDS

- **C** **JOSH TAYLOR** RING, IBF, WBA — U.K. • 16-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **1** **JOSE RAMIREZ** WBC, WBO — U.S. • 25-0-0 (17 KOs)
- **2** **REGIS PROGRAIS** — U.S. • 24-1-0 (20 KOs)
- **3** **IVAN BARANCHYK** — Russia • 20-1-0 (13 KOs)
- **4** **VIKTOR POSTOL** — Ukraine • 31-2-0 (12 KOs)
- **5** **KIRYL RELIKH** — Belarus • 23-3-0 (19 KOs)
- **6** **MAURICE HOOKER** — U.S. • 27-1-3 (18 KOs)
- **7** **JOSE ZEPEDA** — U.S. • 31-2-0 (25 KOs)
- **8** **MARIO BARRIOS** — U.S. • 25-0-0 (16 KOs)
- **9** **ARNOLD BARBOZA** — U.S. • 23-0-0 (10 KOs)
- **10** **BATYRZHAN JUKEMBAYEV** — Kazakhstan • 18-0-0 (14 KOs)

Gennadiy Golovkin, the No. 1-rated middleweight, could get a third shot at Canelo later this year.



Junior middleweight veteran Jermell Charlo (pictured) remains No. 1, above unified titleholder Jeison Rosario.

LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 135 POUNDS

- **C** **VASILIY LOMACHENKO** RING, WBA, WBO — Ukraine • 14-1-0 (10 KOs)
- **1** **TEOFIMO LOPEZ** IBF — U.S. • 15-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **2** **DEVIN HANEY** — U.S. • 24-0-0 (15 KOs)
- **3** **RICHARD COMMEY** — Ghana • 29-3-0 (26 KOs)
- **4** **LUKE CAMPBELL** — U.K. • 20-3-0 (16 KOs)
- **5** **RYAN GARCIA** — U.S. • 20-0-0 (17 KOs)
- **6** **ROBERT EASTER** — U.S. • 22-1-1 (14 KOs)
- **7** **JAVIER FORTUNA** — Dom. Rep. • 35-2-1 (24 KOs)
- **8** **JORGE LINARES** — Venezuela • 47-5-0 (29 KOs)
- **9** **EMMANUEL TAGOE** — Ghana • 31-1-0 (15 KOs)
- **10** **RANCES BARTHELEMY** — Cuba • 27-1-1 (14 KOs)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 130 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **MIGUEL BERCHELT** WBC — Mexico • 37-1-0 (33 KOs)
- **2** **JOSEPH DIAZ JR.** IBF — U.S. • 31-1-0 (15 KOs)
- **3** **JAMEL HERRING** WBO — U.S. • 21-2-0 (10 KOs)
- **4** **TEVIN FARMER** — U.S. • 30-5-1 (6 KOs)
- **5** **RENE ALVARADO** — Nicaragua • 32-8-0 (21 KOs)
- **6** **MASAYUKI ITO** — Japan • 26-2-1 (14 KOs)
- **7** **ANDREW CANCIO** — U.S. • 21-5-2 (16 KOs)
- **8** **MIGUEL ROMAN** — Mexico • 62-13-0 (47 KOs)
- **9** **SHAVKATDZHON RAKHIMOV** — Russia • 15-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **10** **CHRIS COLBERT** — U.S. • 14-0-0 (5 KOs)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 126 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **JOSH WARRINGTON** IBF — U.K. • 30-0-0 (7 KOs)
- **2** **GARY RUSSELL JR.** WBC — U.S. • 31-1-0 (18 KOs)
- **3** **XU CAN** WBA — China • 18-2-0 (3 KOs)
- **4** **SHAKUR STEVENSON** WBO — U.S. • 13-0-0 (7 KOs)
- **5** **KID GALAHAD** — U.K. • 27-1-0 (16 KOs)
- **6** **MARK MAGSAYO** — Phil. • 20-0-0 (14 KOs)
- **7** **TUGSTSOGT NYAMBAYAR** — Mongolia • 11-1-0 (9 KOs)
- **8** **RUBEN VILLA** — U.S. • 18-0-0 (5 KOs)
- **9** **JESSIE MAGDALENO** — U.S. • 27-1-0 (18 KOs)
- **10** **MIGUEL MARRIAGA** — Colombia • 29-3-0 (25 KOs)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 122 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **REY VARGAS** WBC — Mexico • 34-0-0 (22 KOs)
- **2** **EMANUEL NAVARRETE** WBO — Mexico • 31-1-0 (27 KOs)
- **3** **MURODJON AKHMADALIEV** IBF, WBA — Uzbekistan • 8-0-0 (6 KOs)
- **4** **DANIEL ROMAN** — U.S. • 27-3-1 (10 KOs)
- **5** **RYOSUKE IWASA** — Japan • 27-3-0 (17 KOs)
- **6** **BRANDON FIGUEROA** — U.S. • 20-0-1 (15 KOs)
- **7** **TOMOKI KAMEDA** — Japan • 36-3-0 (20 KOs)
- **8** **HIROAKI TESHIGAWARA** — Japan • 21-2-2 (14 KOs)
- **9** **AZAT HOVHANNISYAN** — Armenia • 18-3-0 (15 KOs)
- **10** **STEPHEN FULTON** — U.S. • 18-0-0 (8 KOs)

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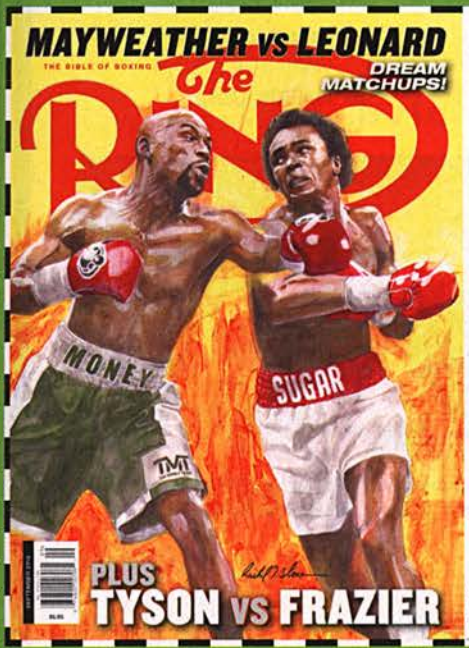

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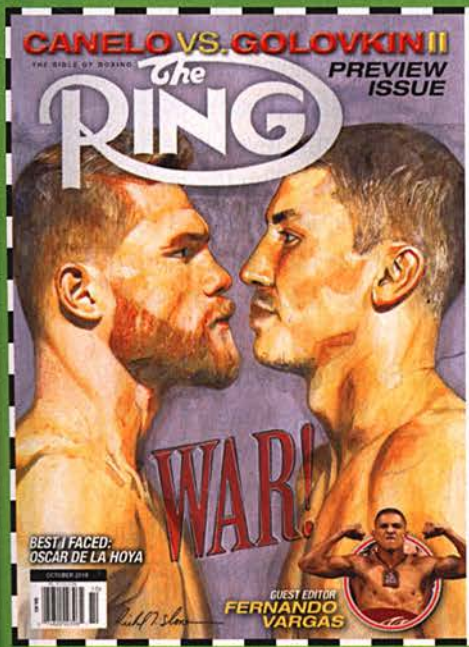

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RATINGS

Through fights of April 18, 2020

BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 118 POUNDS

- **C** **NAOYA INOUE** RING, IBF, WBA
  Japan • 19-0-0 (16 KOs)
- **1** **NONITO DONAIRE**
  Phil. • 40-6-0 (26 KOs)
- **2** **NORDINE OUBAALI** WBC
  France • 17-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **3** **JOHN RIEL CASIMERO** WBO
  Philippines • 29-4–0 (20 KOs)
- **4** **EMMANUEL RODRIGUEZ**
  P.R. • 19-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **5** **ZOLANI TETE**
  S. Africa • 28-4-0 (21 KOs)
- **6** **JASON MOLONEY**
  Australia • 20-1-0 (17 KOs)
- **7** **JOSHUA GREER**
  U.S. • 22-1-1 (12 KOs)
- **8** **TAKUMA INOUE**
  Japan • 13-1-0 (3 KOs)
- **9** **GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX**
  Cuba • 20-1-0 (13 KOs)
- **10** **OSCAR NEGRETE**
  U.S. • 19-2-2 (7 KOs)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 115 POUNDS

- **C** **JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA** RING, WBC
  Mexico • 40-3-0 (27 KOs)
- **1** **SRISAKET SOR RUNGVISAI**
  Thailand • 47-5-1 (41 KOs)
- **2** **ROMAN GONZALEZ** WBA
  Nicaragua • 49-2-0 (41 KOs)
- **3** **KAZUTO IOKA** WBO
  Japan • 25-2-0 (14 KOs)
- **4** **JERWIN ANCAJAS** IBF
  Phil. • 32-1-2 (22 KOs)
- **5** **KHALID YAFAI**
  U.K. • 26-1-0 (15 KOs)
- **6** **ANDREW MOLONEY**
  Australia • 21-0-0 (14 KOs)
- **7** **FRANCISCO RODRIGUEZ JR.**
  Mexico • 33-4-1 (24 KOs)
- **8** **JEYVIER CINTRON**
  P.R. • 11-1-0 (5 KOs)
- **9** **CARLOS CUADRAS**
  Mexico • 39-3-1 (27 KOs)
- **10** **JOSHUA FRANCO**
  U.S. • 16-1-2 (8 KOs)

FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 112 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **KOSEI TANAKA**
  Japan • 15-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **2** **MORUTI MTHALANE** IBF
  S. Africa • 39-2-0 (26 KOs)
- **3** **JULIO CESAR MARTINEZ** WBC
  Mexico • 16-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **4** **ARTEM DALAKIAN** WBA
  Ukraine • 20-0-0 (14 KOs)
- **5** **CHARLIE EDWARDS**
  U.K. • 15-1-0 (6 KOs)
- **6** **ANDREW SELBY**
  U.K. • 13-1-0 (7 KOs)
- **7** **MASAYUKI KURODA**
  Japan • 30-8-3 (16 KOs)
- **8** **JUNTO NAKATANI**
  Japan • 20-0-0 (15 KOs)
- **9** **CRISTOFER ROSALES**
  Nicaragua • 29-5-0 (20 KOs)
- **10** **GIEMEL MAGRAMO**
  Phil. • 24-1-0 (20 KOs)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 108 POUNDS

- **C** **HIROTO KYOGUCHI** RING, WBA
  Japan • 14-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **1** **KENSHIRO TERAJI** WBC
  Japan • 17-0-0 (10 KOs)
- **2** **HEKKIE BUDLER**
  S. Africa • 32-4-0 (10 KOs)
- **3** **CARLOS CANIZALES**
  Venezuela • 22-0-1 (17 KOs)
- **4** **FELIX ALVARADO** IBF
  Nicaragua • 35-2-0 (30 KOs)
- **5** **ELWIN SOTO** WBO
  Mexico • 17-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **6** **TETSUYA HISADA**
  Japan • 34-10-2 (20 KOs)
- **7** **EDWARD HENO**
  Phil. • 14-1-5 (5 KOs)
- **8** **SHO KIMURA**
  Japan • 19-3-2 (12 KOs)
- **9** **DANIEL MATELLON**
  Cuba • 11-0-2 (6 KOs)
- **10** **AGUSTIN GAUTO**
  Argentina • 15-0-0 (10 KOs)

Naoya Inoue sits atop the bantamweight division as Ring champion and unified beltholder.

Junior bantamweight champion Juan Francisco Estrada looks forward to a rematch with the resurgent Roman Gonzalez.

STRAWWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 105 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **WANHENG MENAYOTHIN** WBC
  Thailand • 54-0-0 (18 KOs)
- **2** **KNOCKOUT CP FRESHMART** WBA
  Thailand • 21-0-0 (7 KOs)
- **3** **WILFREDO MENDEZ** WBO
  Puerto Rico • 16-1-0 (6 KOs)
- **4** **BYRON ROJAS**
  Nicaragua • 27-4-3 (11 KOs)
- **5** **VIC SALUDAR**
  Phil. • 20-4-0 (11 KOs)
- **6** **JOSE ARGUMEDO**
  Mexico • 23-4-1 (14 KOs)
- **7** **SIMPIWE KONKCO**
  S. Africa • 19-6-0 (7 KOs)
- **8** **PEDRO TADURAN** IBF
  Phil. • 14-2-1 (11 KOs)
- **9** **DANIEL VALLADARES**
  Mexico • 22-1-1 (13 KOs)
- **10** **MELVIN JERUSALEM**
  Phil. • 15-2-0 (9 KOs)

HOW OUR RATINGS ARE COMPILED

RECORDS PROVIDED BY BOXREC.COM

Championship vacancies can be filled in the following two ways: 1. The Ring's Nos. 1 and 2 contenders fight one another. 2. If the Nos. 1 and 2 contenders choose not to fight one another and No. 1 fights No. 3, that matchup could be for the Ring title if the Editorial Board deems No. 3 worthy.

A champion can lose his belt in six situations: 1. The Champion loses a fight in the weight class in which he is champion; 2. The Champion moves to another weight class; 3. The Champion does not schedule a fight in any weight class for 18 months, although injuries and certain other unforeseen circumstances could be taken into consideration; 4. The Champion does not schedule a fight at his championship weight for 18 months (even if he fights at another weight); 5. The Champion does not schedule a fight with a Top-5 contender from any weight class for two years; 6. The Champion retires.

The Ring Editorial Board considers input from the Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world and then decides collectively what changes will be made. That applies to both the pound-for-pound and divisional ratings.

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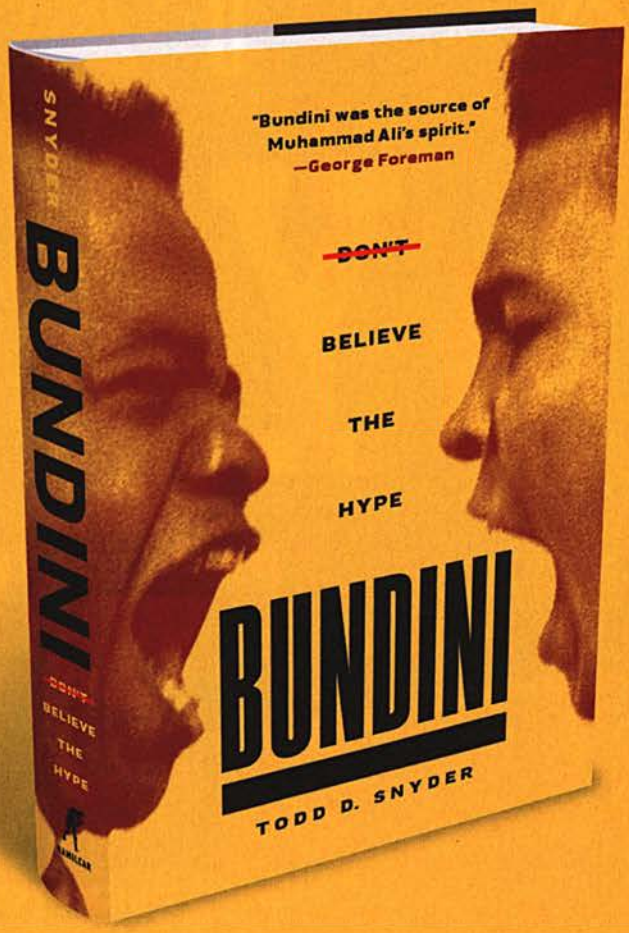

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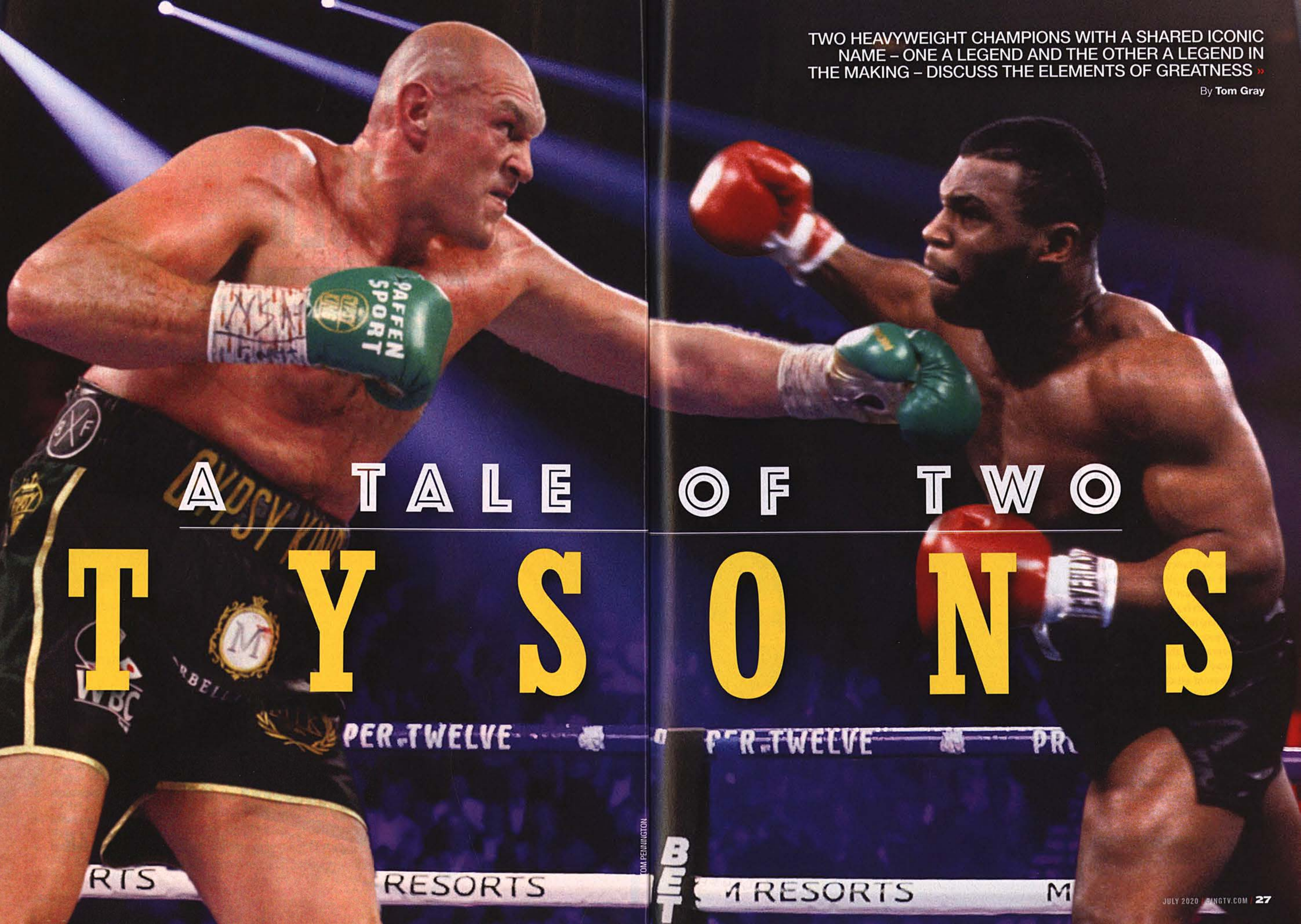
TWO HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONS WITH A SHARED ICONIC NAME – ONE A LEGEND AND THE OTHER A LEGEND IN THE MAKING – DISCUSS THE ELEMENTS OF GREATNESS »

By **Tom Gray**

A TALE OF TWO TYSONS



"TYSON!"

The name is inextricably linked with boxing. In the same way that fistic institutions such as Muhammad Ali and, yes, Rocky conjure up images of punch-swapping for glory, the name "Tyson" will be connected to the sport forever. And now its significance is twofold.

In 1988, Mike Tyson was the undisputed heavyweight champion of the world and arguably the most famous human being on the planet. Like previous killer punchers Sonny Liston and George Foreman (during his first incarnation), "Iron Mike" wore a cloak of invincibility and instilled fear into the opposition before a punch was thrown. However, unlike Liston and Foreman, who were largely shunned by fans during their reigns, the charismatic Tyson was a global phenomenon. Non-fight fans were Tyson fans. The biggest brands in the world sought his name and likeness. He was the talk of school playgrounds. Kids named their dogs after him. And, on August 12, 1988, over 3,000 miles away from Tyson's home city of Brooklyn, John Fury named his son after him.

Tyson Luke Fury was a fighter from the beginning. Born three months premature in Manchester, England, the future of the glamour division weighed in at just one pound. His chances of survival were miniscule, but his father, himself a professional fighter, was confident that his son could overcome the odds. All he needed was a strong name and the fighting heart of his Gypsy heritage.

Fast-forward over three decades and Tyson Fury is the Ring Magazine heavyweight champion (for a second time), the WBC titleholder and one of the best-known athletes in the world today. When you take a step back to look at how this story has evolved, it's every bit as Hollywood as any Rocky script.

Like his namesake, Tyson Fury has transcended the sport, albeit for different reasons. Outside of the ring, Fury is as intuitive as Tyson was intense. Between the ropes, he's as elusive as Tyson was explosive. But one thing that Fury has in common with his predecessor is that he can fight like hell.

Physically, they're vastly different specimens. Mike Tyson is 5-foot-10 with a 71-inch reach and, at his best, he was approximately 220 pounds. The unbeaten Fury stands 6-foot-9, has an 85-inch reach and weighed in at a colossal 273 pounds for his seventh-round annihilation of Deontay Wilder in February.

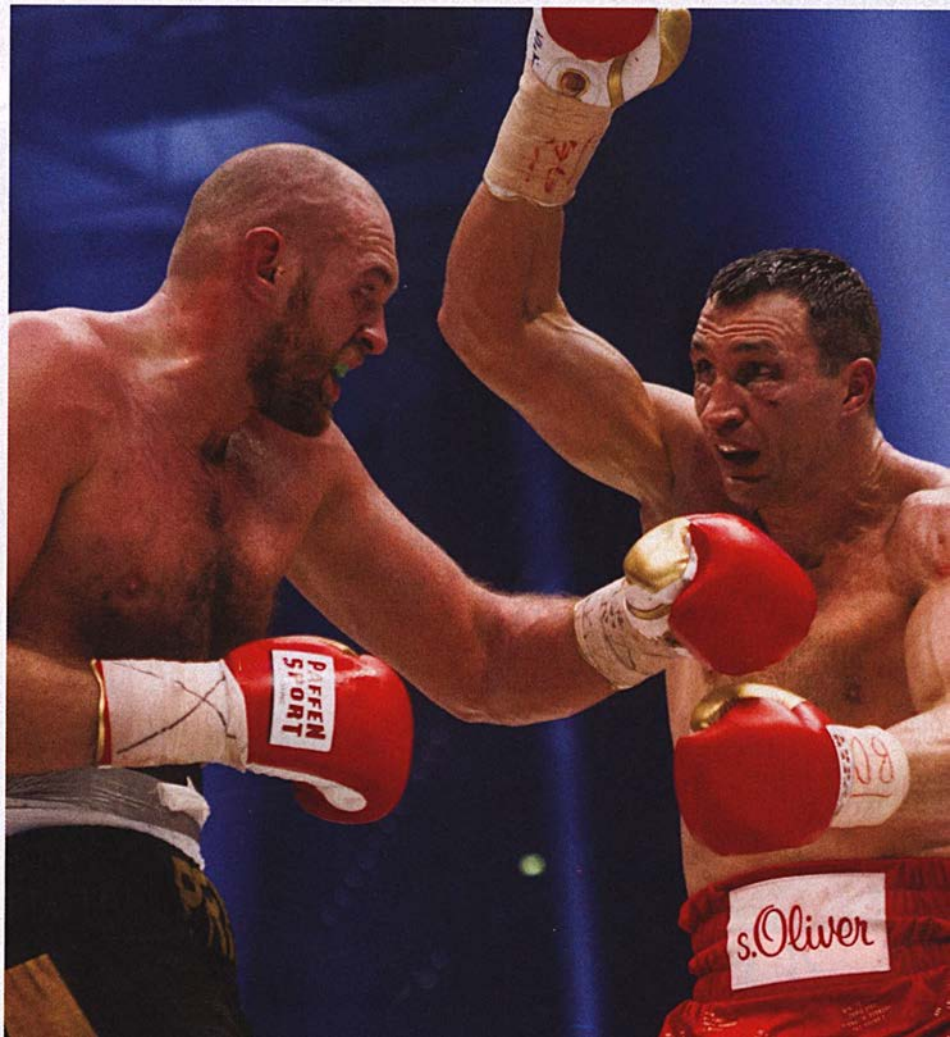
Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, interest in fantasy fights has soared and fans are up for anything. Case in point: The World Boxing Super Series took to broadcasting *Fight Night Champion* matchups (CPU vs. CPU on a gaming console) and made a significant success out of it. Mythical matchups are almost as old as the sport itself, and they'll be debated for as long as boxing exists. Put simply, it's an addiction.

With this Tyson vs. Tyson matchup, The Ring was lucky enough to secure contributions from both men. The respect they have for each other is enormous, so it wasn't possible to generate an ego-driven rivalry here. However, their respective opinions on each other's careers and how they would hypothetically deal with an opponent who possessed the other's strengths and weaknesses is fascinating.

Buckle up for an all-Tyson cross-generational showdown:

SUPER STRENGTHS

TYSON FURY: "What made Mike Tyson special is that he dedicated his life to the sport. In the early days, nothing else mattered except smashing people's faces in. He had that aura about him where he was going in the ring, and



Fury's awkwardness is one of his strengths, says Tyson.

Tyson's first battle with Frank Bruno inspired a young Fury.

people were falling over before they'd been hit. His speed was a great asset in the ring. A lot of people think it was the power, but it was the speed that did the damage. He had precision, great mobility, accuracy, and it was all in rhythm. His defense was underestimated too, because he had great footwork and head movement. All of these things combined made him a very dangerous fighter."

MIKE TYSON: "Tyson Fury knows what he's doing. At 6-foot-9, he's very agile for a guy his size, and more than that, he's smooth – real smooth. He's like an awkward version of Floyd Mayweather (Jr.) in the ring, but regardless of the awkwardness, he's very effective. He's unique, eccentric. But what makes him special is more than just his fighting skills. A large part of it comes from his (Gypsy) origins, his family's background, his father's upbringing. It's deeper than being a fighter; his accomplishments extend much further than just boxing."

WHAT WEAKNESSES?

FURY: "With Mike Tyson, in the early days, his will to win was just phenomenal. It's probably more mental than anything else when you're in there with him. You've got to train hard, stand up to him, do the best you can and fight back – that's what Buster Douglas did. Take the punishment and keep moving forward – that approach works with almost anybody. You can expose weaknesses in any fighter and, with the right game plan, any fighter can be beaten. That's been proven time and time again."

TYSON: "Every fighter has weaknesses, but you have to overcome them. Tyson Fury got knocked down a couple of times (by Wilder in the first fight) and that was his weakness. What did he do? He got back up and overcame it. Every fighter has a weakness and nobody's perfect. You can fight the perfect fight, but you're never truly perfect."

PEAK PERFORMANCES

FURY: "I used to watch Mike Tyson's videotapes when I was young. I really loved him because he was a very exciting fighter, very entertaining, and he was inspirational. I used to watch him knock out all these guys and think to myself, 'One day I'll be doing that! One day I'll be winning championships!'

"I remember watching the (Trevor) Berbick fight, his first world championship (win), and Berbick kept falling because his brain was saying, 'Get up,' but his legs wouldn't allow it. I remember big Frank (Bruno) putting up a valid challenge. He caught Mike Tyson with a good shot once and was very brave but, ultimately, he got beat. I remember the fights with Razor Ruddock; they were great fights. Francois Botha, Lennox Lewis. People will say Lennox Lewis' best win is Mike Tyson, but that wasn't the Mike Tyson from the '80s."

TYSON: "I was a little worried for Tyson in both Deontay Wilder fights, even though I felt he'd pull out the victories. (Wilder) was throwing hard, hard punches, and he was throwing them fast. I was like, 'Damn!!!!' But Tyson fought totally differently in that second fight. When Deontay couldn't knock him out or hit him with those murderous punches, he became a little discouraged, and Tyson just opened up on him. He became more and more confident, threw everything he had, and the guy just cracked.

"I thought Wladimir Klitschko would beat Tyson Fury. We're talking about a very technical, hard puncher with an Eastern European style. But again Tyson surprised me. After Klitschko, when he had the layoff, I wasn't sure if he'd come back again. But sometimes, and I know this sounds crazy, champions need to feel sorry for themselves and that motivates us. Feeling sorry for

ourselves motivates us to get out of the doldrums. We're down, the world hates us, nobody believes in us, but we become motivated to prove the world wrong. That's a big thing for Tyson. Gypsies have been downtrodden and mistreated from the beginning of time, but now they've got the heavyweight champion of the world and that's amazing – he's a hero."

DOES SIZE MATTER?

FURY: "There's different ways of looking at height. If you're really tall, like I am, then you can use that to your advantage. Or you can be really small and use that to your advantage, like Mike did. But you're either punching up or punching down, and both are dangerous. But it would be ridiculous to compare Mike Tyson to Deontay Wilder or Anthony Joshua. He would have walked straight to Wilder, hit him once and absolutely poleaxed him, and Joshua even quicker. Why? Because those fellas have no defense, and he'd just walk straight to guys like that. Mike Tyson, with his angles, would have sorted them."

TYSON: "Over a hundred years ago, (former heavyweight champion) Tommy Burns proved that size doesn't matter. Burns was 5-foot-7 and outjabbed guys over six feet. He was one of the greatest fighters of all time and very underrated. Tommy Burns brought so much to boxing and proved that shorter guys can outbox bigger and stronger guys."

TYSON VERSUS TYSON

FURY: "To be honest, I don't like matching fighters from the past with current fighters. I don't like to pit myself against boxing heroes in a virtual reality fight, because I find it disrespectful. But my answer is that I'll beat any man born from his mother. I just wouldn't say that directly about any of the heroes from the past. But, deep down, I don't believe that any fighter from the past can beat me. I think I'm the greatest fighter that's ever lived – from any generation. Plus, I don't get intimidated – all of the intimidation factors that would have worked with Joshua and Wilder wouldn't work with me. On the night, no matter who they are, when they're in that ring, they're just men with gloves on – just like me."

Tyson felt invincible at his peak as undisputed heavyweight champ.

TYSON: "Against someone of Tyson Fury's size, you've got to be aggressive, move your head and be elusive, because if you stand still against a man that size, you're an easy target. You need to attack, use angles and stay away from his punching distance. You need to be close, but you can't stay at a distance that allows the bigger fighter to get off. The thing about it is, Tyson adapts, and that's what we saw in the last fight. Everyone thought Wilder would be more confident because he'd scored two knockdowns in the first fight. And they weren't flash knockdowns; they were brutal knockout-type knockdowns. The world expected Wilder to be more confident, but it was the other way around. A lot of people don't understand that size and style isn't the most important thing in the ring; it's the morale of a fighter that leads to victory. His determination, his will to win, his desire is what makes him a champion. But at my best, I thought I was the greatest fighter from Achilles, through the Art of War, since the beginning of God, since the beginning of time – I was invincible. And if there are other fighters out there that don't think that way, then they have a problem."

OUTSIDE OF THE RING

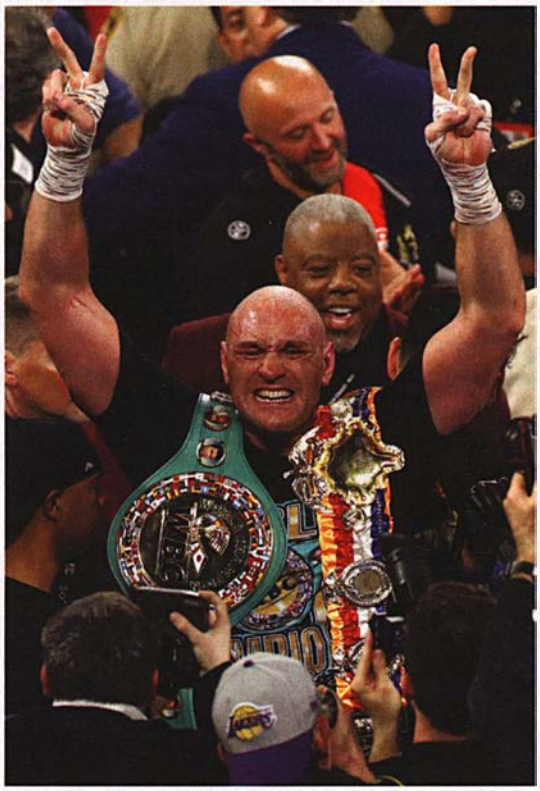
FURY: "We have a good connection. I find Mike to be a really decent person – a really nice, down-to-earth bloke. He's had a very, very tough life. A lot of good things have happened and a lot of bad things have happened, but he's learned from his experiences. He's become very mature; he's doing different things now, and he should be congratulated for overcoming all the things that he has. We're similar in that we've endured tough times; we've both been down and picked ourselves up again. We both know what it's like to have everything, and we both know what it's like to have nothing. I think he's struggled with mental health problems, like myself, and that's a day-to-day battle.

"An amazing thing happened when I was in Las Vegas. Before I went into training camp (for the Wilder rematch), I took Paris and the kids there for Christmas and New Year. We were in a mall and there was a sign saying that Mike Tyson would be at this sports memorabilia place, and it was just about to start. I went in with the family and said, 'I'm here to see

Mike,' went around this curtain and shouted 'Mike!!!!' He sees me and yells, 'Ohhhhhh, the champ's here!' It was such an amazing moment; he stopped everything that he was doing, came out and gave me a big hug. I introduced him to the family and said, 'Can I get a picture with you and my kids?' He's like, 'Sure, champ!' It was just such a great moment. To think that I'd watched him as a child, one of my heroes, and now he's coming up to embrace me and telling everyone, 'The champ's here!' That is a surreal moment that I'll never, ever forget."

TYSON: "Please thank Tyson for telling that story. I remember something similar when I met Sugar Ray Robinson. I was 18 years old and we were at the (1984) Olympic Games in Los Angeles. Sugar Ray said, 'Make sure you're in shape,' so I went out and ran 10 miles that day. He just had to say that one sentence. He was such a hero of mine, and if he wasn't the greatest fighter that ever lived, then he's the greatest imitation of it.

"With Tyson, if he didn't go through everything he's been through, he wouldn't be the person that he is today. The mental health issues? That's why he's the greatest, because he's sick, and that's being real. People want him to be normal. Yeah, be normal and go on the fuckin' welfare line. Tyson doesn't know what normal is. Tell him to stay the fuck away from normal; he wasn't meant to be normal."



Fury's got his idol's endorsement as the best heavyweight.

In the final analysis, a prime Mike Tyson's irresistible mix of explosiveness, elusiveness, speed and power would be a deadly threat in any era, including today's land of the giants. When Tyson referenced Tommy Burns, the shortest heavyweight champion in history, that tells you just how confident he would be in taking down today's fighters in his prime. He once said on HBO that "jabbing is all about timing. You can be 5-foot-6 and outjab someone 6-foot-2."

"I understand what he's saying, for sure," Fury admitted. "Size doesn't really matter if you're brilliant, as Floyd Mayweather has proved. Then again, there's the old saying: 'A good big one will always beat a good little one.' That's been proved time and time again. 'Oh, he could have done something if he was bigger!' 'Oh, that guy was way too big for him; they look like they're from different weight categories.' I've watched boxing all my life, and people always say these things.

"I'm blessed by God, and I'm gifted. I've seen many athletes: footballers, basketball players, wrestlers. There are big athletic guys out there, but they haven't got the footwork, the agility, the movement that I've got. Even LeBron James, I don't think he has the movement that I have, and he's not as big as me, he's not as heavy as me. I'm naturally gifted as a boxer and a mover. I've got skinny little racehorse's legs and I'm built for speed, movement and agility. You don't train that or do anything with it. I'm blessed – it's a gift."

And that's what's crucial here – Fury isn't all about size. His mobility and athleticism for a man of his dimensions are truly remarkable, and the heavyweight division has seen nothing like him. In the 1960s, Ali, at 212 pounds, was lauded for his athleticism and grace. Fury might not look as beautiful as Ali moving around the ring, but he's 50-60 pounds heavier and extremely effective.

Tyson himself acknowledged that Fury's movement and defensive finesse will also cause problems for the only elite-level heavyweight that he has yet to face.

"I love Anthony Joshua, but a fight with Tyson Fury is going to be interesting when it happens," said the former champion without prompting. "(Previous Joshua opponent Wladimir) Klitschko doesn't move as well as Fury does. Klitschko moves with his legs, whereas Fury is moving right in front of you and hitting you with punches. If that fight comes off, Joshua will need to attack the body, because he's not going to hit him to the head. And if he hits him once, he's not going to hit him a second time.

"Can you imagine that fight in the U.K.? The stadiums over there won't be big enough!"

Had Mike Tyson and Tyson Fury faced off in their respective primes – in any country – the promoters would have had the very same problem. RING

Tom Gray is Associate Editor for Ring Magazine. Follow him on Twitter: @Tom_Gray_Boxing.

FURY: BRADLEY COLLYER

TYSON OR TYSON ??

THE BADDEST MAN ON THE PLANET... 'IRON' MIKE TYSON!!

TYSON IS USED TO FIGHTING TALLER OPPONENTS...

... HE WILL GET INSIDE AND BREAK FURY'S RIBS!

FURY IS NOT ONLY TALLER, HE IS ALSO MUCH HEAVIER, ...

THE DREAM MATCH...

CHAMPION VS. CHAMPION...

... HE IS JUST TOO BIG FOR TYSON!!

BUT WHO WINS TYSON VS. TYSON?

THE "GYPSY KING"... TYSON FURY!!

FURY WILL NOT BE INTIMIDATED BY TYSON. AFTER ALL, HE FOUGHT WILDER TWICE!

BAAAAM!!

BOOM!

A ROONEY-TRAINED TYSON IS SIMPLY INVINCIBLE!!

TYSON IS ONE OF THE GREATEST FINISHERS!

KRACK

TYSON IS QUICKER..

... AND FURY DOES NOT HAVE THE POWER TO KEEP TYSON OFF RANGE!

TYSON KNOCKS FURY OUT IN THE 4TH OR 5TH ROUND!

FURY IS VERY QUICK FOR HIS SIZE!

POW!

WHAM

HE WILL DOMINATE TYSON. HE WILL BULLY THE BULLY!

FURY BY LATE STOPPAGE!

KRONK AAA RT

MIKE TYSON:
GREATEST HITS

THE FORMER UNDISPUTED HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION DESCRIBES SIX PERFORMANCES THAT HELPED BUILD 'THE BADDEST MAN ON THE PLANET' »

By **Tom Gray**

The style had been seen before, but the total package was unique.

Mike Tyson was a practitioner of the peek-a-boo style that was made famous by his mentor, Cus D'Amato. The legendary trainer-manager transformed Floyd Patterson into the first ever two-time heavyweight champion of the world and later guided Jose Torres to light heavyweight glory. Both Patterson and Torres carried their hands high, they were quick of foot, they moved their heads, they switched from body to head effortlessly and released sharp combinations.

D'Amato also founded a system where every punch was represented by a number. He would yell out numbers in different variations and the fighter would respond with the desired burst of punches. The numbers were set in stone, but stringing them together in combination made the system versatile, with the patterns changing depending on an opponent's style and game plan. It was economical, strategically brilliant and ideal for an offensive force.

Tyson was the ultimate offensive force in the glamour division. He was bigger and more powerful than Patterson and, despite being a heavyweight, quicker than Torres. His killer instinct and thirst for combat was also visceral. D'Amato was positive that he had a diamond in the rough, a heavyweight champion-in-waiting, and his new charge soaked up knowledge like a sponge. Tyson didn't reach the top of the tree as an amateur, but he was bred for the professional game.

On November 4, 1985, D'Amato passed away at the age of 77. By that time, Tyson was a super-hot prospect with 11 knockouts in as many fights and he had already captured the attention of the boxing world. Assistant trainer and former fighter Kevin Rooney continued to develop the young fighter from prospect to top-flight contender.

One year later, on November 22, 1986, Tyson was 27-0 with 25 KOs when he entered the ring to face WBC titleholder Trevor Berbick. The challenger dropped the Canada-based Jamaican twice in Round 2 to become the youngest heavyweight titleholder in boxing history at 20.

Tyson reigned as the undisputed king of the heavyweight division during the late 1980s.

D'Amato's prophecy had come true.

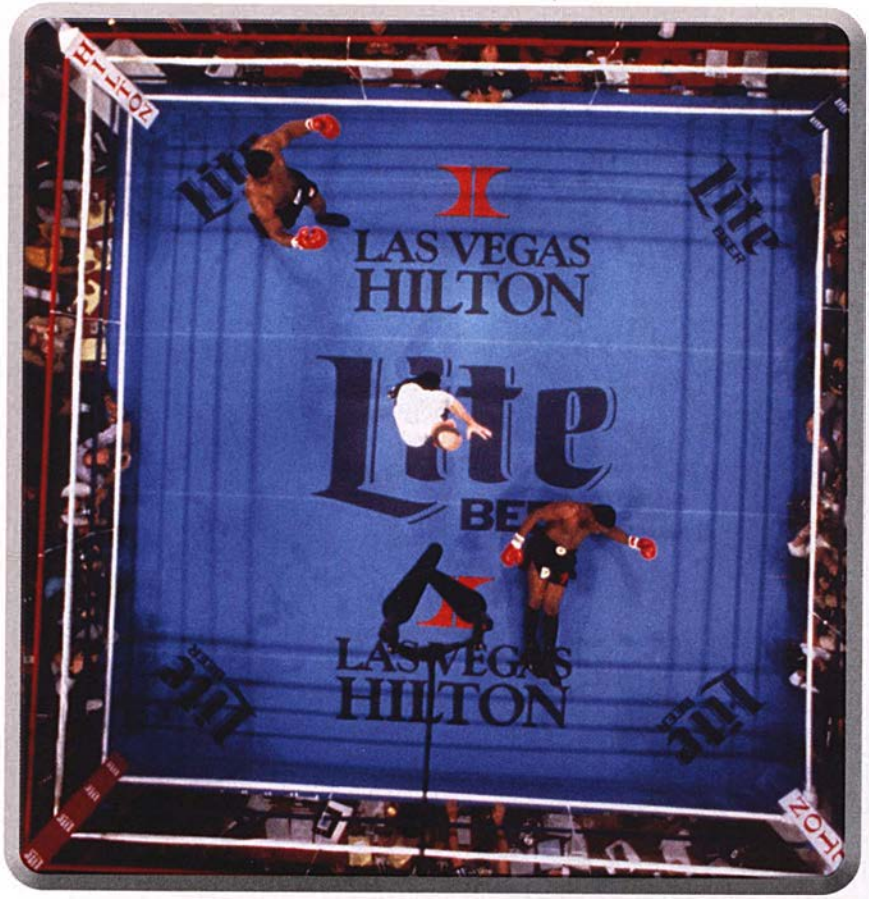
Over the next three years, Tyson wreaked havoc. In 1987, he dominated James "Bonecrusher" Smith and Tony Tucker, both on points, to claim the WBA and IBF titles, respectively. Those triumphs saw him recognized as the first undisputed heavyweight champion in almost a decade. Total dominance was achieved in June 1988 when Tyson butchered then-Ring Magazine and lineal champion Michael Spinks in just 91 seconds.

"I was probably at my best for Michael Spinks," Tyson told The Ring before releasing the type of undiluted and uncut response for which he's become synonymous. "I was married to the gold-digger wife, there was the gold-digger manager (Bill Cayton) and (promoter) Don King's ripping me off. I'm being torn apart emotionally and physically. I'm all over movies, television, I've got lawsuits up the ass, but I turn in the greatest performance of my fuckin' career. Isn't that crazy?"

He's settled now, but Tyson's life during his professional career was certainly crazy. In what is still widely regarded as the biggest upset in boxing history, he lost his titles to Buster Douglas via 10th-round knockout in February 1990. Two years later, he was behind bars after being found guilty of rape, a crime which he insists to this day that he did not commit.

Returning to the ring in 1995, Tyson did regain WBA and WBC versions of the title, but he never again found the form that electrified the boxing world when he was at his peak. The second half of his career was marred by controversy – the shocking double ear-bite on Evander Holyfield in their 1997 rematch being at the top of the list – and he suffered losses to fighters that wouldn't have lived with him in his heyday. Tyson retired for good in 2005 with a record of 50-6 (44 KOs) and was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2011.

The former undisputed heavyweight champion spoke to The Ring about six of his greatest triumphs. »

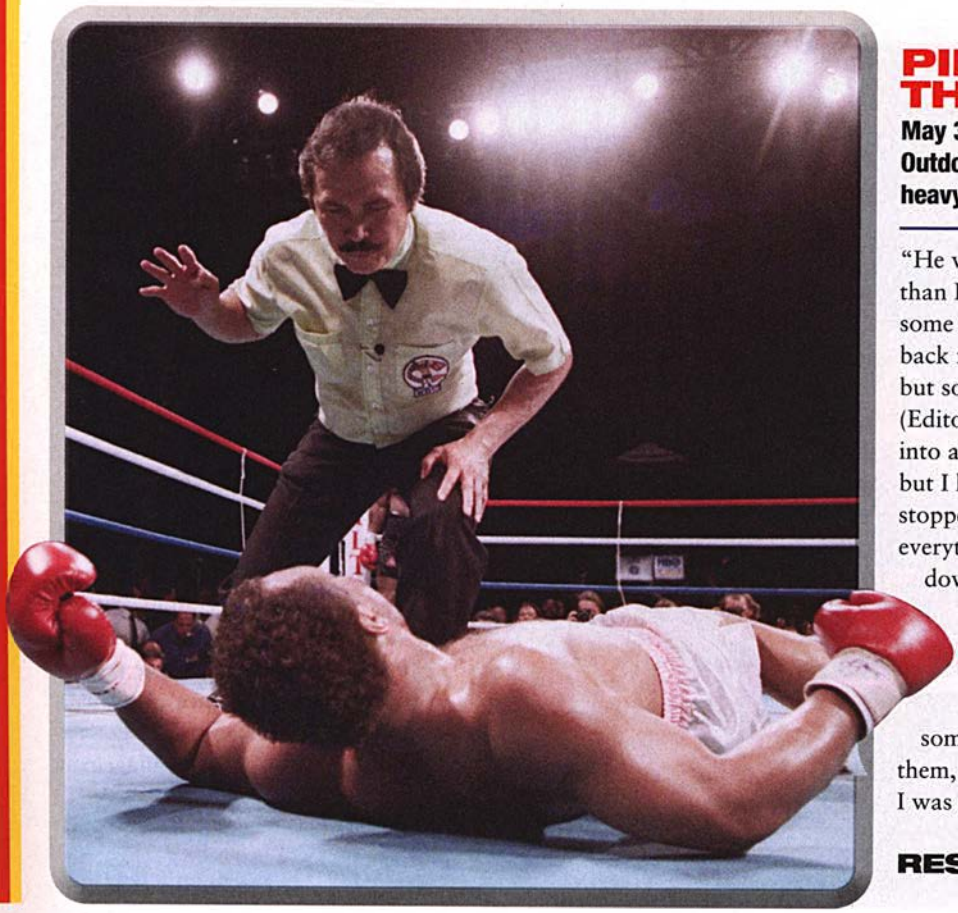


TREVOR BERBICK

November 22, 1986, Hilton Hotel, Las Vegas • Titles: WBC heavyweight

"I'm in the Hilton Hotel one day, walking along this floor, and I hear someone knock on a door. The door opened and I hear Berbick say, 'No, I'm not going to the gym today!' That gave me the confidence that this bitch-ass motherfucker was slacking up. What a coincidence. What are the chances of me being on that floor? What are the chances? I was so excited that I ran back to the gym and worked out again. When I heard him say he didn't want to train, I was like, 'Now I'm gonna work out twice as hard!' I was coming to avenge Muhammad Ali (Berbick outpointed a faded Ali in December 1981) and my intentions were to hurt him really bad. It was a good moment for me."

RESULT: TKO 2

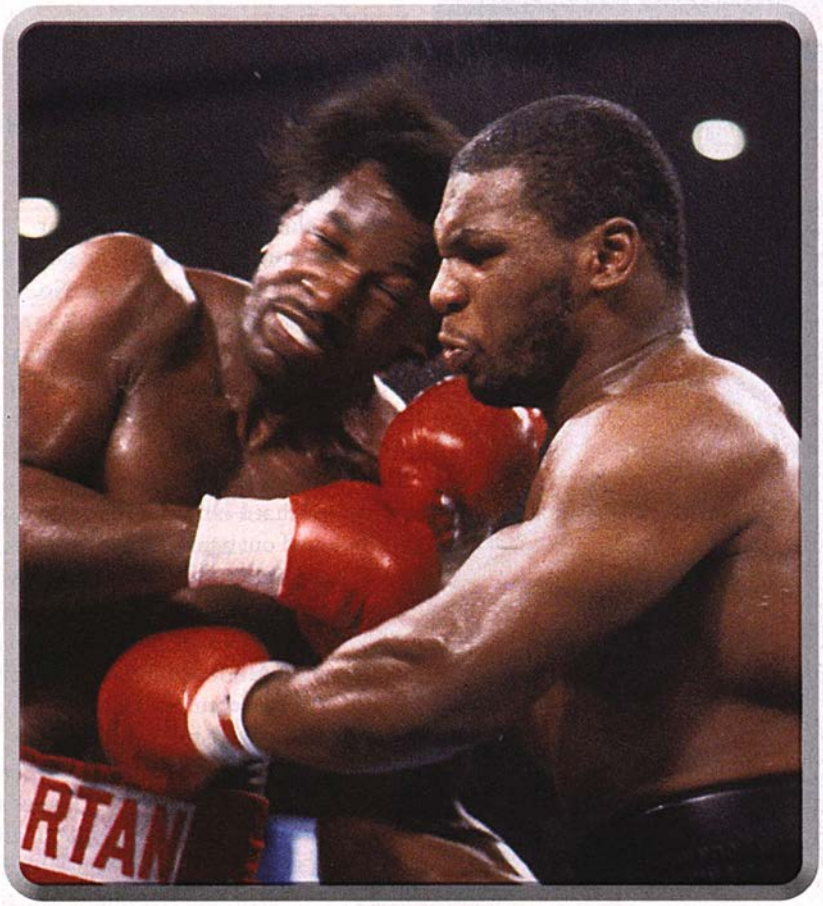


PINKLON THOMAS

May 30, 1987, Hilton Hotel, Las Vegas, Outdoor Arena • Titles: WBA/WBC heavyweight

"He was very durable and a lot tougher than I thought he was. I hit him with some great shots early and he came back fighting. I was surprised by that, but somewhere around the fifth round (Editor's note: It was Round 6), he ran into a left hook. He took that shot too, but I knew it was a bomb. The left hook stopped him in his tracks, so I threw everything I had at him and he went down. But he fought a great fight, and I had a great deal of respect for Pinklon Thomas. I was kind to him afterwards because my hero, Jack Dempsey, would brutalize someone and then go over and hug them, shake their hand and be respectful. I was copying my idol."

RESULT: TKO 6

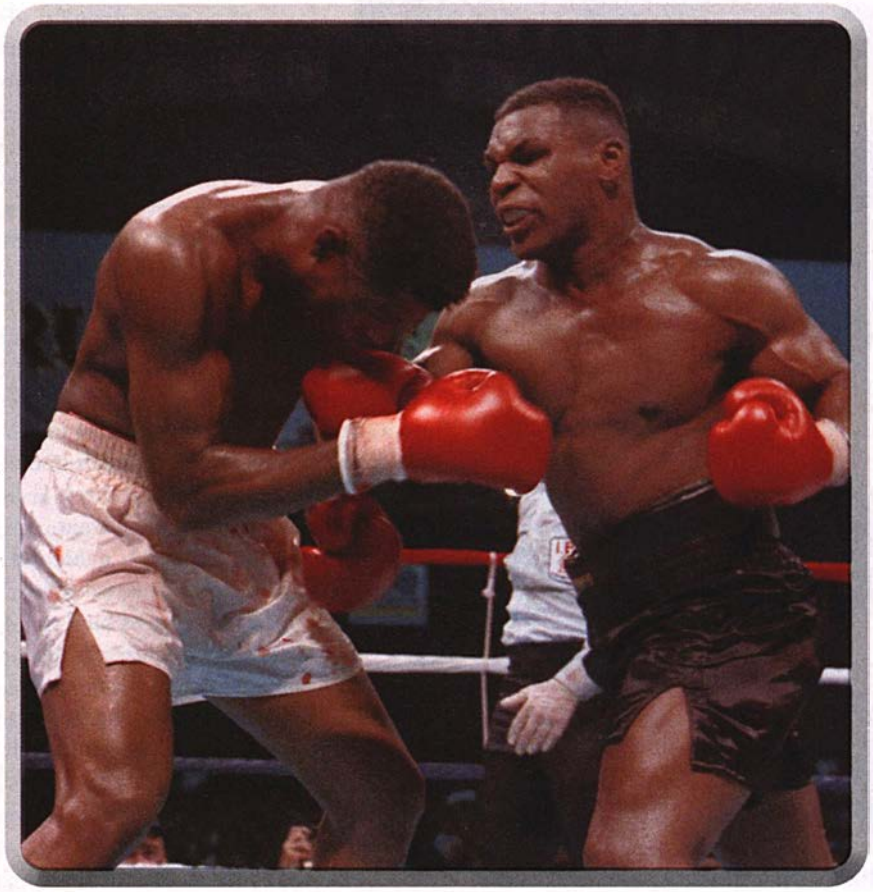


TONY TUCKER

August 1, 1987, Hilton Hotel, Las Vegas • Titles: IBF/WBA/WBC heavyweight

"Tucker was a really good fighter, but around that time I was partying a lot. I trained for a while, took two weeks off, hung out with some girls, came back, trained for three weeks, then went 12 rounds with him. In the first round, he really surprised me, catching me with a punch (left uppercut) that I didn't see. Tucker was a magnificent fighter, but it was my time, and I stayed on top of him and didn't give him a chance to breathe. There was no way for him to get his moves off and counterpunch, because I was all over him. Becoming undisputed champion was special because everything Cus and I talked about since I was 12 years old had come true. Imagine your father talking about you making something happen when you're a kid and then you make it happen. Wow!"

RESULT: UD 12

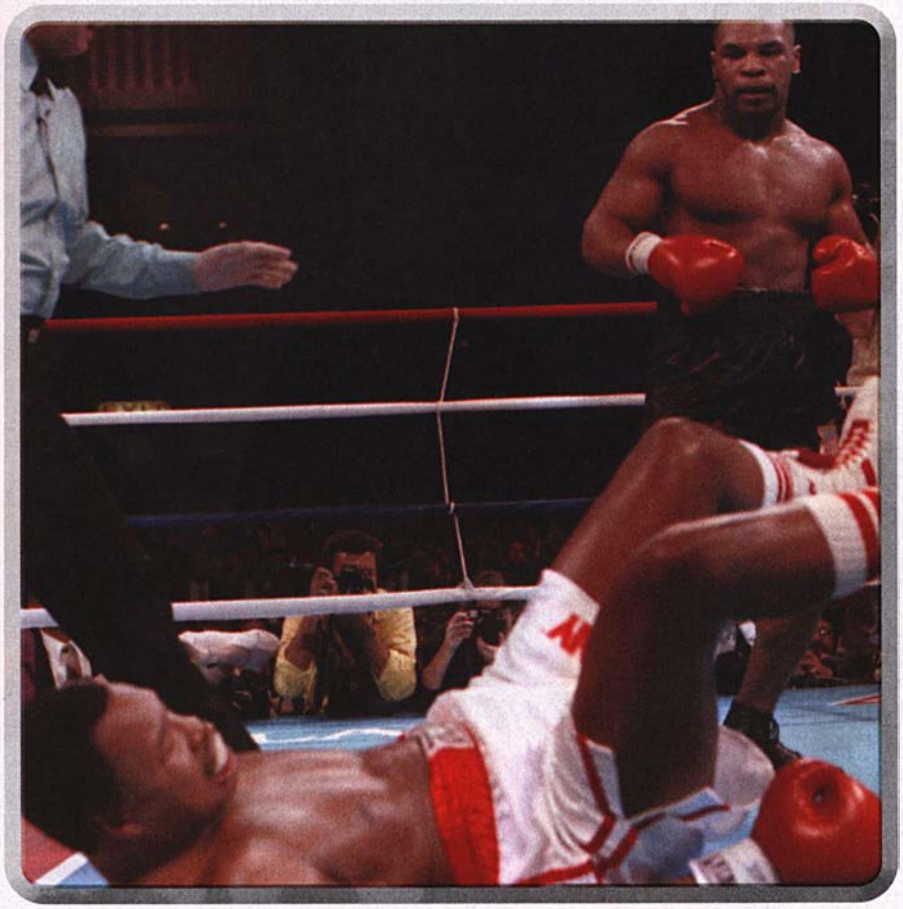


TYRELL BIGGS

October 16, 1987, Convention Hall, Atlantic City • Titles: IBF/WBA/WBC heavyweight

"It crossed my mind that I could take the fight the full 15 rounds (Tyson-Biggs was the final heavyweight championship bout to be scheduled for 15), but I really didn't want to. My mentor, Cus D'Amato, wasn't just about beating a person; he wanted you to break his spirit, crush him, destroy him, never give your opponent the slightest idea that he can beat you. Biggs had plenty of courage, but they moved him a little too fast (Biggs fought Tyson in his 16th fight after less than three years of professional experience). He was a great amateur and could have gone a lot further as a pro if his management had slowed things down."

RESULT: TKO 7



LARRY HOLMES

January 22, 1988, Convention Center, Atlantic City • Titles: IBF/WBA/WBC heavyweight

"At his best, I thought Holmes was magnificent – the king of his time. Again, this was about avenging Ali (Holmes stopped an aging Ali in October 1980), but after the fight, I mimicked Jack Dempsey by being respectful. I said that Holmes was a great fighter, and that was the truth. Would it have been a harder fight if he was younger? Hell yeah! Check this out: He came out of retirement and hadn't fought for over two years when he fought me. But after that, he had 10 or 15 fights and started doing really good. He did really well with Evander Holyfield four years later."

RESULT: TKO 4

MICHAEL SPINKS

June 27, 1988, Convention Hall, Atlantic City • Titles: Undisputed heavyweight

"I was very confident that I would win that fight, but he was a great light heavyweight. I remember one day I was sparring Frank Bruno at Grossinger's in upstate New York and Michael Spinks was there. He was in training for a light heavyweight fight, and he actually stayed and watched me spar. I could never have known then that we would fight one day, and that just shows you how unpredictable boxing can be. At heavyweight, Michael Spinks could be awkward to fight, and with Larry (Holmes) being a bit over the hill, that made things twice as difficult (Holmes lost two decisions to Spinks). But Spinks was too small for me, his knees were bad, he was an older guy and he didn't really want to win."

RESULT: KO 1

Tom Gray is Associate Editor for Ring Magazine. Follow him on Twitter: @Tom_Gray_Boxing.

A LEGACY OF HIS OWN

ROGER MAYWEATHER IS BEST KNOWN AS HIS NEPHEW'S TRAINER, BUT TO THE '80S GENERATION OF BOXING FANS, THE TWO-DIVISION CHAMP WAS MUST-SEE TV

By **Don Stradley**

Roger Mayweather defeated so many Mexican fighters that Don King dubbed him the "Mexican Assassin." Mayweather told Sports Illustrated that he preferred to be called the "Black Mamba," but added, "If you pay me enough money, you can call me anything you want." Like his famous nephew, Floyd Mayweather Jr., Roger made it clear that boxing was about getting paid and little else. Even early in his career, when fighters are at their most naïve, he provided a statement that could've been the Mayweather family motto. "Boxing's not my hobby," he said. "It's my business." »

Roger Mayweather shared the ring with the best fighters of his era, including Julio Cesar Chavez (opposite page), who blocks a jab from 'The Black Mamba' during their 1989 rematch.

A LEGACY OF HIS OWN

Floyd will be remembered as the best of the fightin' Mayweather clan, but it is impossible to imagine 1980s boxing without his uncle Roger. Whether it was during his early days as a prelim fighter at The Silver Slipper in Las Vegas or later when he was a titleholder in two weight classes, Roger Mayweather offered a mix of high-level boxing and wicked right-hand power. In a heyday of televised bouts, he was perhaps the ultimate TV boxer. He was skillful enough to be exciting, vulnerable enough that victory wasn't a sure bet, and plenty colorful. A rough trash-talker given to wearing gaudy sunglasses, sombreros and robes adorned with skulls and snakes, Mayweather was out to entertain.

The up-and-down pattern of his career was established early. In 1983, as a gifted 21-year-old with only 14 fights behind him, he won the WBA junior lightweight belt by scoring an eighth-round stoppage of veteran titleholder Sammy Serrano. Three bouts later, Rocky Lockridge crushed Mayweather in one round.

"I was champion of the world one minute and everybody was talking to me," Mayweather told the Associated Press. "The next minute, I was just another fighter looking for a fight."

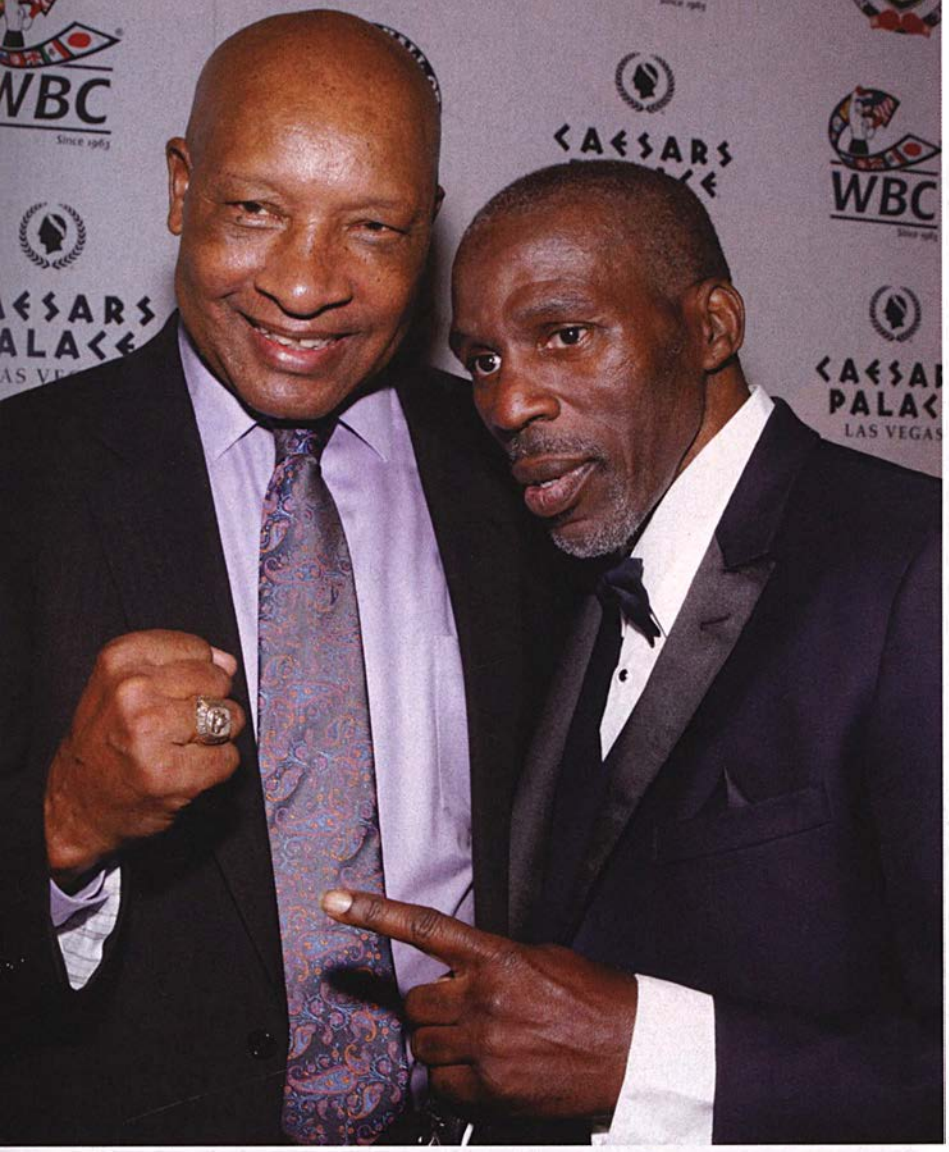
And the fights were almost always memorable. After a third-round KO of Kenny Baysmore in 1985, Mayweather described the way he sized up an opponent in the opening minutes: "I like to go in and mix it up early and see how he handles my punches ... If I hurt him, I stay cool. I don't want to make any mistakes that will let him out (of trouble)."

Mayweather's swashbuckling style resulted in 59 career wins, 35 of them by KO. There were also 13 losses, six of them ending before the final gong. Despite his boxing talents, his wasn't the record of a careful boxer. It was the record of a fighter who occasionally got the worst of it but always came to rumble.

It's no wonder that his bony body housed a mammoth confidence. He'd been a fine amateur, winning three Golden Gloves titles in his hometown of Grand Rapids, Michigan, before he was, in his own words, "barred because I was using pro tactics." His older brother, Floyd, who began his own pro career in 1974, had taught young Roger the old-school move where you grab an opponent, spin him and whack him in the back of the head. Roger practiced it like a dance step. However, Mayweather's penchant for mocking his opponents drew the ire of AAU officials. "I'll tell you how bad it was," Mayweather once told the Los Angeles Times. "I knock a guy out cold and the referee walks over and raised his hand."

By 1981, Roger had followed his brother into the paid ranks. Outlawed in Grand Rapids gyms because of his unsportsmanlike attitude, Mayweather relocated to Las Vegas, where he was unknown. He soon made the acquaintance of Billy Baxter, the famous Georgia gambler who became his manager. Things moved swiftly for Mayweather, but after beating Serrano there were rumors that he'd developed a big head and that he'd achieved too much too soon. Despite a title belt, he remained the conceited youngster from Grand Rapids. Just minutes before fighting Lockridge, he'd told Baxter, "I'm going to knock this guy out like we're double-parked outside," only to be flattened himself in 91 seconds. He and Baxter would still laugh about it years later. Their philosophy seemed

Mayweather (pictured vs. Harold Brazier) made for entertaining fights.



Mayweather and former referee Richard Steele at the Nevada Boxing Hall of Fame induction celebration in 2015.

to be that no matter how bad things got, you just had to laugh.

Roger Mayweather's recent death at 58 was not totally unexpected. He'd been suffering from poor health, and recent YouTube clips of him revealed a tired man showing the telltale effects of a long boxing career. The memorial, held at the Serenity Funeral Home in North Las Vegas on March 27, 2020, was live-streamed on the internet. It was a quiet, respectful ceremony highlighted by friends and family members recalling Mayweather's generosity. The service ended with the body taken away in a horse-drawn carriage procession. It was all quite elegant.

"My uncle was one of the most important people in my life inside and outside of the ring," Floyd Jr. said in a prepared statement.

Indeed, the lasting image of Roger Mayweather for younger fans may be of him in the corner of Floyd Jr., working as his chief trainer. But for older fans, Roger was much more than a crusty cornerman. In his own way, he'd been must-see television before the term was coined.

Bird-legged and broad-shouldered, he was built for punching. Though his movements weren't always graceful, he was deceptively light on his feet, and though his chin was unreliable, he went on several lengthy undefeated streaks. He practiced the familiar Mayweather stance, using his left shoulder to deflect punches, but it wasn't his nature to stay in a defensive shell. He had a puncher's instinct to let his right hand fly, plus the family trademark of outsized cockiness.

His onetime trainer Jesse Reid once described Mayweather for the Reno Gazette-Journal, using such words as "rude" and "nasty." "I told him in the corner once, 'I'm on your side.' He was arrogant," Reid said. More recently, Roger's younger brother, Jeff, said on the Mayweather YouTube channel that Roger could be kind, especially with kids, but that he also had "a criminal mind." Jeff joked that if Roger hadn't found boxing, "(he'd be) robbing somebody."

Even Mayweather admitted that he could be difficult. "I've mellowed a lot," he said in 1991. By then, his career was beginning a downturn and he was mounting one of his many comebacks. "I know my profession now," he said.

Whether he ever truly mellowed is doubtful, but that he knew his profession was never in question. Even in one of his signature defeats, a 12-round decision loss to Pernell Whitaker in March 1987, Mayweather found a moment to shine. In front of Whitaker's hometown fans in Norfolk, Virginia, Mayweather endured eight rounds of humiliation from a younger, slicker fighter. In the ninth, Mayweather finally flashed the right hand and put the brilliant Whitaker on his knees, dazed. How many fighters hit Whitaker cleanly? How many rocked him? Roger Mayweather did. Though too tired to finish him, Mayweather fought hard in the final rounds and even clocked Whitaker with a shot after the last bell. It wasn't enough to win, but it was thrilling.

Eight months later, Mayweather scored a sixth-round KO of Rene Arredondo for the WBC title at 140 pounds. That was the fun of watching Mayweather. He was never out of the picture for long.

He defeated some of the well-known names of the day, including Vinny Pazienza, Terrence Alli, and, in a battle of over-the-hill ex-titleholders, Livingstone Bramble. There were

losses, too, lots of them, including two to Julio Cesar Chavez, but they were part of the giant canvas that was Roger Mayweather's fighting career.

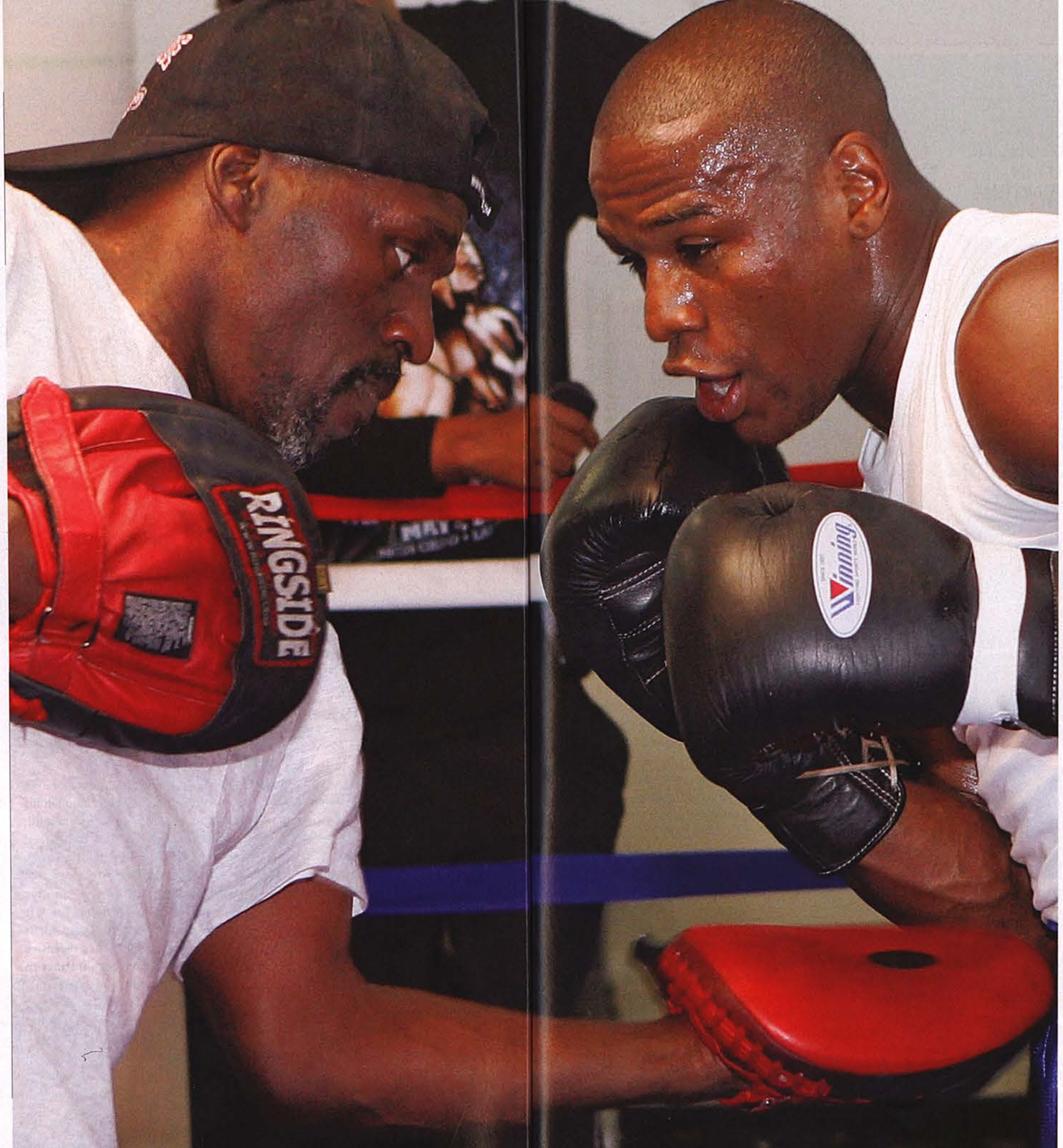
There were some crazy times. After beating Harold Brazier in a bout where he took tons of punishment but rallied for a split decision win, Mayweather wrecked his car the next morning. He'd been driving himself to a hospital to see if his jaw was broken and ended up crashing. Along with scalp lacerations, he drew citations for driving without a license or insurance.

When a ring riot broke out after Mayweather's win over Pazienza, Roger remained cool enough to punch Pazienza's raging trainer, Lou Duva, cutting him and putting him on the canvas. These were shades of the riot Mayweather partly instigated in 2006 when Floyd Jr. was fouled by Zab Judah. Roger stepped through the ropes that night to bust some heads, only to be fined $200,000 and have his trainer's license revoked for a year.

His personal life was just as erratic as his boxing life. He had an altruistic side and was known for taking part in charity work, including a stint on the Salvation Army's board of directors. He even made appearances at high schools to talk about the dangers of drugs. He could also show a volatile side. One of his more publicized outbursts was in 2009, when he attacked a female fighter he'd once trained. He also received a six-month prison term for assaulting the grandmother of his infant child in 2006. Of course, he wasn't the only Mayweather to get in trouble with the law, and some have wondered openly if Floyd Jr.'s recurring bad behavior was a result of his uncle Roger's sinister influence.

Whether he was a good guy with a dark side or a bad guy with a good soul, the general consensus on Roger Mayweather the fighter is that he had poor timing. It was his bad luck to be around at the same time as such blue-chip talents as Whitaker and Chavez. One might also say that he got as far as his limitations would take him.

"Roger Mayweather was a great fighter," Jesse Reid once said. "If he had done everything properly, gone to sleep at night, he would've been a champion a long, long time."



Mayweather coached his nephew while still an active fighter and eventually gained fame as a trainer in retirement.

His title reigns were brief, but he certainly fought a long, long time. He spread 72 professional fights over 18 years, his final bout a lackluster effort against journeyman Javier Francisco Mendez at the Cal-Neva Casino in Reno. Looking bored and out of shape, Mayweather struggled to earn a majority decision and hastily left the ring amid a shower of boos. The poor performance made him realize that he was done at 38. There were no more comebacks.

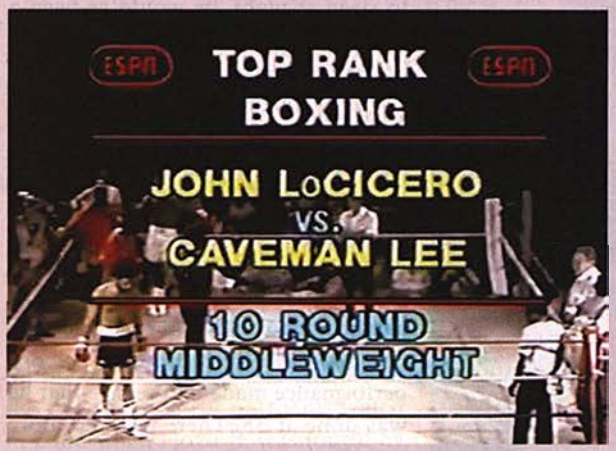
A 2015 YouTube clip showed the damage that Mayweather had suffered through boxing. Speaking in a raspy mumble, he lamented that people close to him had noticed changes in the way he spoke. He claimed he still felt the same and wasn't aware of any problems. Then, after several seconds of struggling, he spit out words to the effect that when a fighter has a long career, "something happens."

If only he'd been a bit more of a defensive fighter, like his nephew, he might have spared himself a few violent knockout losses. For that matter, if Floyd Jr. had owned a right hand like his uncle, he might've been more compelling. But Floyd Jr. was Floyd Jr., and Roger was Roger, and the latter put a stamp on his times as few others did. It was an era that demanded action, and he provided it, even if it left him on the canvas now and then. What boxing fans want is a guy who takes chances, and Roger Mayweather took them. He never made an impression on the history of the sport, and he probably doesn't belong in the International Boxing Hall of Fame. But on the history of 1980s boxing – and its explosion of televised fights – his mark was deep and has to be acknowledged.

QUARANTINE TO THE CLASSICS

EVEN WITH LIVE BOXING ON HOLD, THERE'S ENOUGH ONLINE GOLD TO KEEP ANY SHUT-IN FIGHT FAN HAPPY INDEFINITELY

By **Lee Groves**



There are sensational fights from the '70s and '80s online, including LoCicero-Lee, Bassa-McAuley (middle) and Stewart-Sellers (bottom).

In the June 1990 issue of The Ring, Robert Cassidy wrote this of fight film collector Kurt Noltimier: "If a heavy snowstorm ever hits Minneapolis and reduces the city to a fortress of ice and snow, forcing its citizens indoors for days, maybe even weeks, Kurt Noltimier will be prepared. In fact, he might even welcome such a blizzard."

Three decades after these words were published, people were forced indoors for a reason that was *not* welcomed: a pandemic that by the time of our printing had infected 2.4 million and killed more than 160,000 around the world, with the numbers still growing. Virtually every major sports league was shut down and the 2020 Olympics, which had been scheduled to begin July 24 in Tokyo, were pushed back one year. Boxing followed suit as shows scheduled for March, April, May and early June either were canceled or postponed. Additionally, the International Boxing Hall of Fame chose to cancel its Induction Weekend festivities set for June 11-14 and honor the 2020 Class alongside its 2021 colleagues at the event set for June 10-13 of next year. (Note: All members of this year's class are already Hall of Famers and their plaques have been placed inside the museum. The only difference is that they will receive the full IBHOF bells and whistles one year later.)

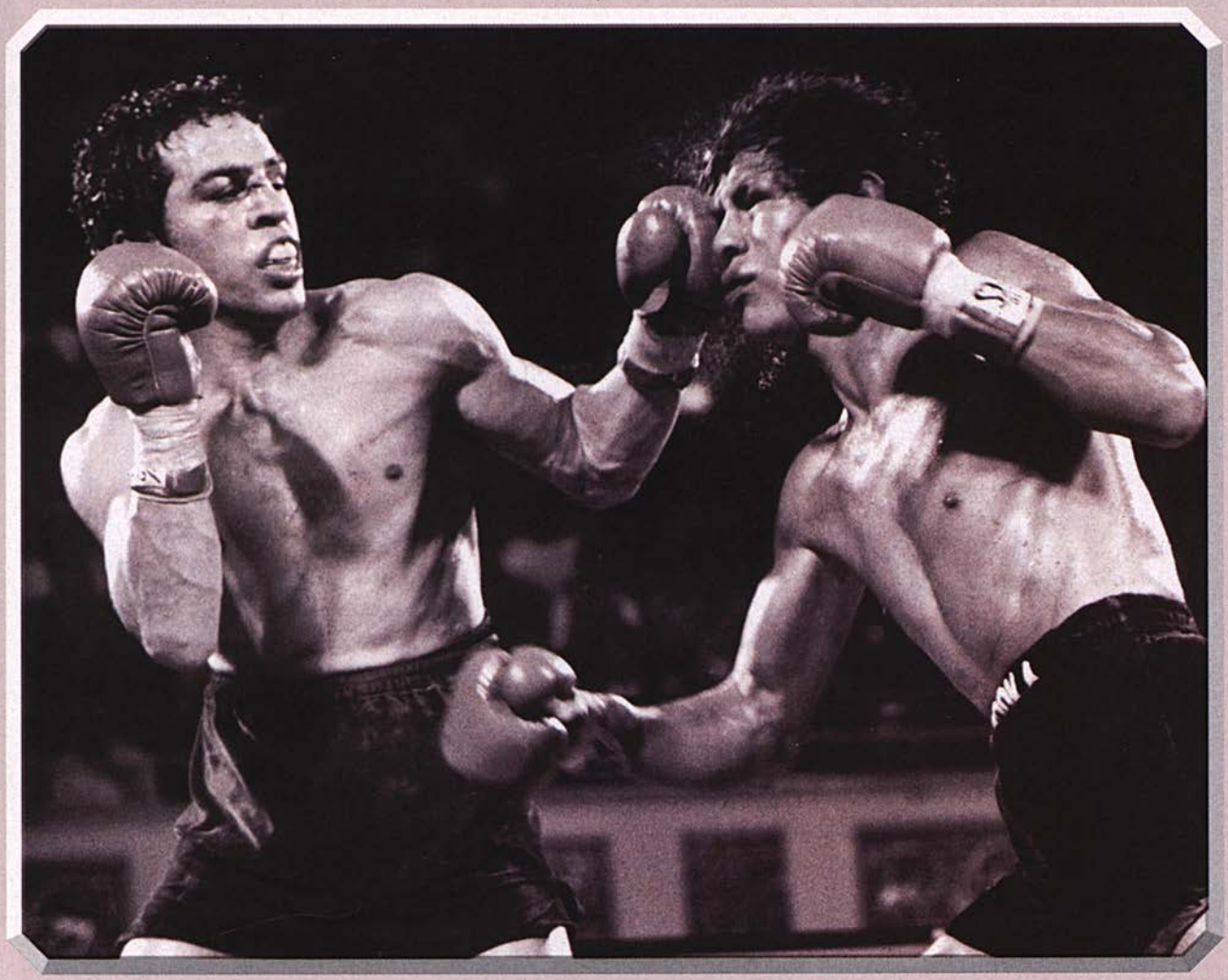
With no fresh fights on the horizon, boxing fans turned toward the past to get their fix. But with the prospect of being indoors for an indeterminate period, one could only watch Muhammad Ali's greatest hits, the "Four Kings" round robin or the fabulous Gatti-Ward, Bowe-Holyfield and Barrera-Morales trilogies so many times.

Of course, mavens like Noltimier would never lack for fights to watch in a situation such as this, but what about the typical boxing fan who doesn't have thousands of VHS tapes and DVDs adorning their shelves? The good news is that YouTube, Dailymotion and other free internet platforms boast plenty of classic bouts, and those contests are just one search and one click away from being summoned.

As someone who has his own large sports video collection – and as someone whose first book, *Tales From the Vault*, was about under-the-radar gems – I assembled a list of fights that would make any extended period inside a little more fun. Some of these fights may be very familiar to some readers, but for those who have not yet seen these matches, they will *not* disappoint.

But even if the pandemic's grip loosens – and history suggests that it will – these fights should serve as a guidepost for those who want to increase their knowledge of boxing history and as a reminder to older readers of why they came to love the sport in the first place.

A final note: Recognizing that some readers may not have seen these selections, these recaps were written in non-spoiler fashion. Rest assured, however, these fights are guaranteed gold.



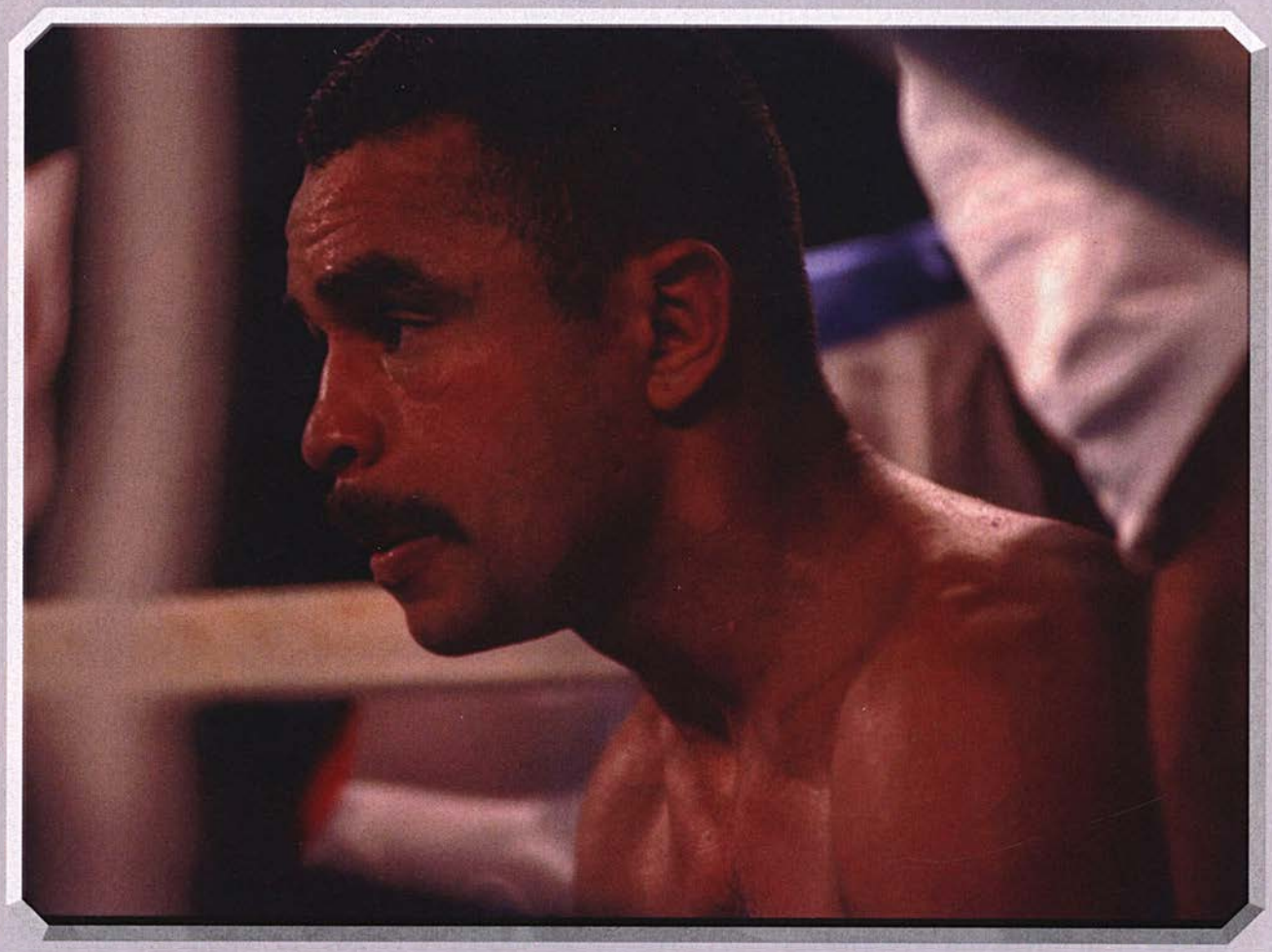
Bobby Chacon and archrival Rafael "Bazooka" Limon (right) battled for 15 epic rounds when they met for the fourth time in 1982.

RAFAEL "BAZOOKA" LIMON - BOBBY CHACON IV (DECEMBER 11, 1982)

In my 46 years as a boxing fan, this is the greatest single fight I've seen, not just because of the two-way action inside the ring but also because of the pumped-up crowd that crammed inside Sacramento's Memorial Auditorium and the compelling backstory that preceded it. Chacon first became a world champion at age 22, but the charismatic Californian lost the belt in his second defense to future Hall of Famer Ruben Olivares, thanks in part to excessive partying and the torturous weight-cut that resulted from it. A skeletal Chacon was blasted out in two rounds and the "Schoolboy" spent the next seven years trying to regain what he had squandered. He lost title shots to Alexis Arguello and Cornelius Boza-Edwards, and his then-wife Valerie was so distraught by his continuing to box that she committed suicide the night before his March 1982 match against Salvador Ugalde. Chacon went through with the fight (he won in Round 3) and nine months later he met Limon, against whom he had already gone 1-1-1 over 27 brutal rounds. It could be argued that Limon, a pure brawler prone to cuts and serial fouling, should have been three-for-three, and their time in the ring only heightened their mutual loathing. This was the only fight of the four in which a world title was at stake, and both men's efforts reflected that reality. Although this fight was staged in Sacramento, it was made for Hollywood.

WILFREDO VAZQUEZ SR. - ANTONIO AVELAR (MAY 30, 1986)

This bantamweight battle was a continuation of the neverending fistic war between Mexico (Avelar) and Puerto Rico (Vazquez), and the stakes were high for both. The 25-year-old Vazquez had turned in a brave but unsuccessful challenge against WBC titlist Miguel Lora three months earlier and was hoping a victory over Avelar, a former WBC flyweight titleholder, would earn him a second shot. Avelar had gone 9-3 since losing his belt to Prudencio Cardona via savage one-punch KO, including a fourth-round TKO loss to the 6-5 Arturo Mujica in his most recent outing. Vazquez was a heavy favorite based on that result, but once the bell sounded, an all-out war broke out. The two exchanged thumping power shots that belied their light poundage, and one of the rounds



in this fight remains the greatest single round I've seen. When you watch it, guess which one it is.

WILLIAM LEE - JOHN LOCICERO (JULY 9, 1981)

Longtime ESPN commentator Al Bernstein has said one of the rounds from this fight is the greatest he has ever called, and, like Vazquez-Avelar, this was a crossroads fight that pitted an undefeated hotshot slugger (Lee) against a fellow warrior in desperate need of a victory after a decision loss to Norberto Sabater more than eight months earlier. The fight itself features a gradual build, but the crescendo will tell you why Lee's nickname is "Caveman," why LoCicero was such a terrific TV fighter and why this fight is on the list.

Puerto Rico's Wilfredo Vazquez was put to the test vs. Mexican veteran Antonio Avelar when the bantamweights clashed in 1986.

BRUCE CURRY - MONROE BROOKS (APRIL 7, 1978)

There are grudge fights, and then there is Curry-Brooks, whose stakes went far beyond the NABF junior welterweight title. At first, the two were such close friends that they lived together for nearly a year, but their sparring sessions sharpened their competitive edges, and the fact they liked the same Fort Worth woman further heightened the tension. The personal fury was so acute that Curry could no longer tolerate any ties to Brooks, including fighting for the same manager in Henry Davis. For this reason, Curry approached Jesse Reid, a veteran chief second who, by taking on Curry, became a manager for the first time. The fight-night atmosphere inside the Olympic Auditorium in Los Angeles vibrated with excitement, and while both did their best to suppress their hatred, it didn't take long for it to bubble to the surface. The in-ring action was intense, the ending was explosive and the post-fight scene was stunning, given their history. Check it out.

ALEX STEWART - EZRA SELLERS (OCTOBER 8, 1998)

Historians of a certain age would state that the 1976 thriller between George Foreman and Ron Lyle is the gold standard for heavyweight brawls, with multiple knockdowns and head-snapping shifts of momentum. But while the action in Foreman-Lyle was sustained, the Stewart-Sellers

fight was one of those rare events that was transformed from an ordinary heavyweight encounter into a spectacle so astonishing that blow-by-blow man Barry Tompkins was left laughing in wonder while analyst Rich Marotta declared it "the fight of our entire series at Fight Time on Fox." Once you watch it, you'll know why.

LELAND HARDY - IKE PADILLA (MARCH 30, 1989)

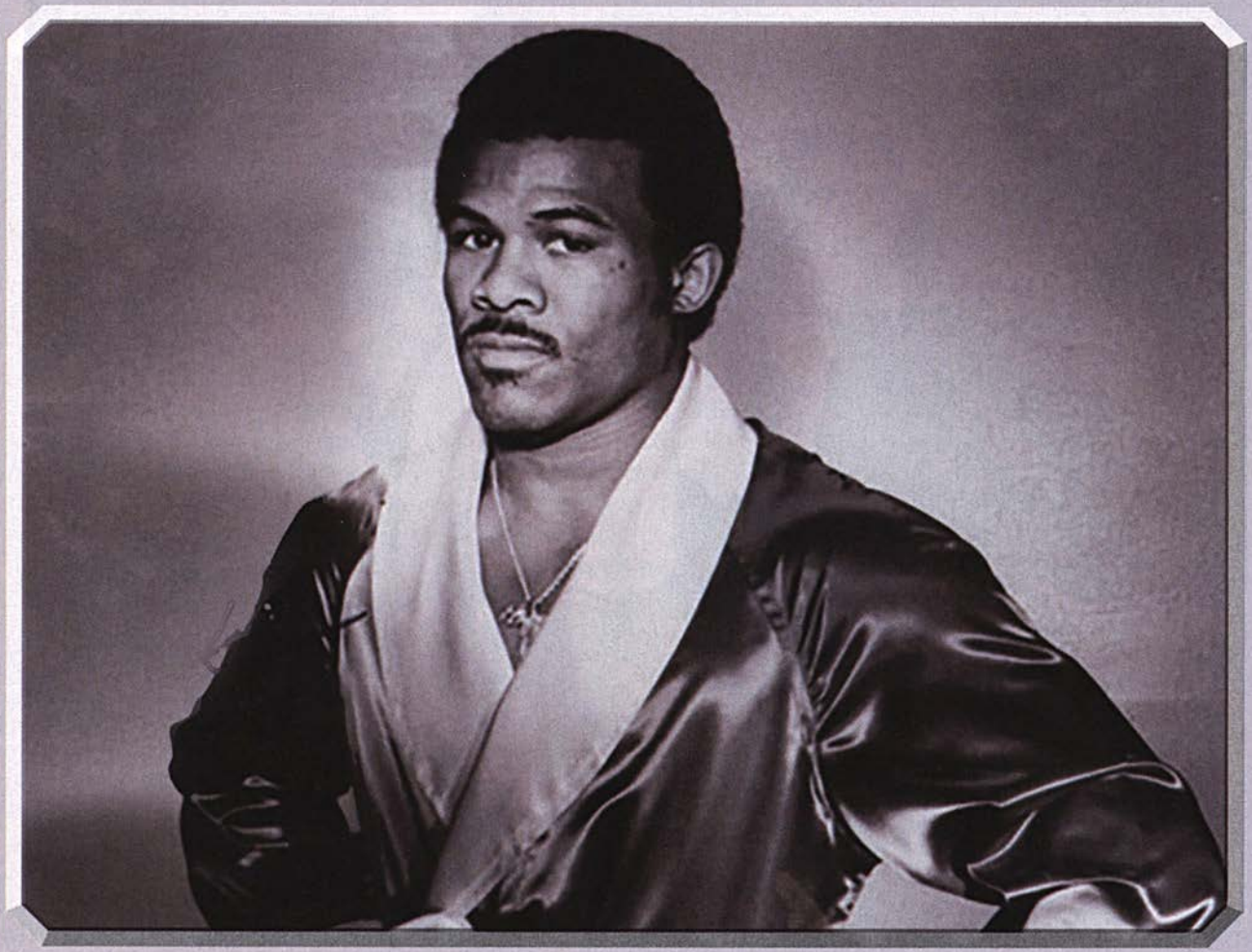
Just as Limon-Chacon IV is the best overall fight I've ever seen, Hardy-Padilla holds the honor for the greatest deep undercard fight I've watched. Both men were in the infancy of their respective careers; the New York-based Philadelphian Hardy was 1-2-1 (1 KO) and Padilla (3-0, 3 KOs) was the perceived A-side at this Felt Forum fight because one, he was from Yonkers; two, he was a former New York Golden Gloves champion; and three, he was the "house" fighter. Like Stewart-Sellers, Hardy-Padilla was a bit slow to percolate, but the bell for Round 2 ignited a series of electrifying events that would raise this bout from a humdrum anonymous table-setter to a celebrated cult classic.

FIDEL BASSA - DAVE MCAULEY I (APRIL 25, 1987)

This WBA flyweight title match between champion Bassa and challenger McAuley ranks among the most heart-pounding contests ever staged inside the historic King's Hall in Belfast, Northern Ireland, as the home-country hero McAuley, the British flyweight champion, went tooth-and-nail with the favored Colombian from start to finish. The cacophonous crowd did its best to lift their chosen one after he endured a nightmarish start, and the fighter somehow managed to answer every Bassa wave with his own counterattacks. The viewer is taken on a most memorable roller coaster ride of emotions, and the result remained in doubt until nearly the final second. Both champion and challenger were put through fire, and both were made better by it.

ALFONSO ZAMORA- ALBERTO SANDOVAL (OCTOBER 26, 1978)

During the 1970s and early 1980s, Southern California was the epicenter for spectacular bouts in the lower weight classes, and this bantamweight classic between



Munroe Brooks (below) battled friend-turned-foe Bruce Curry at L.A.'s historic Olympic Auditorium.

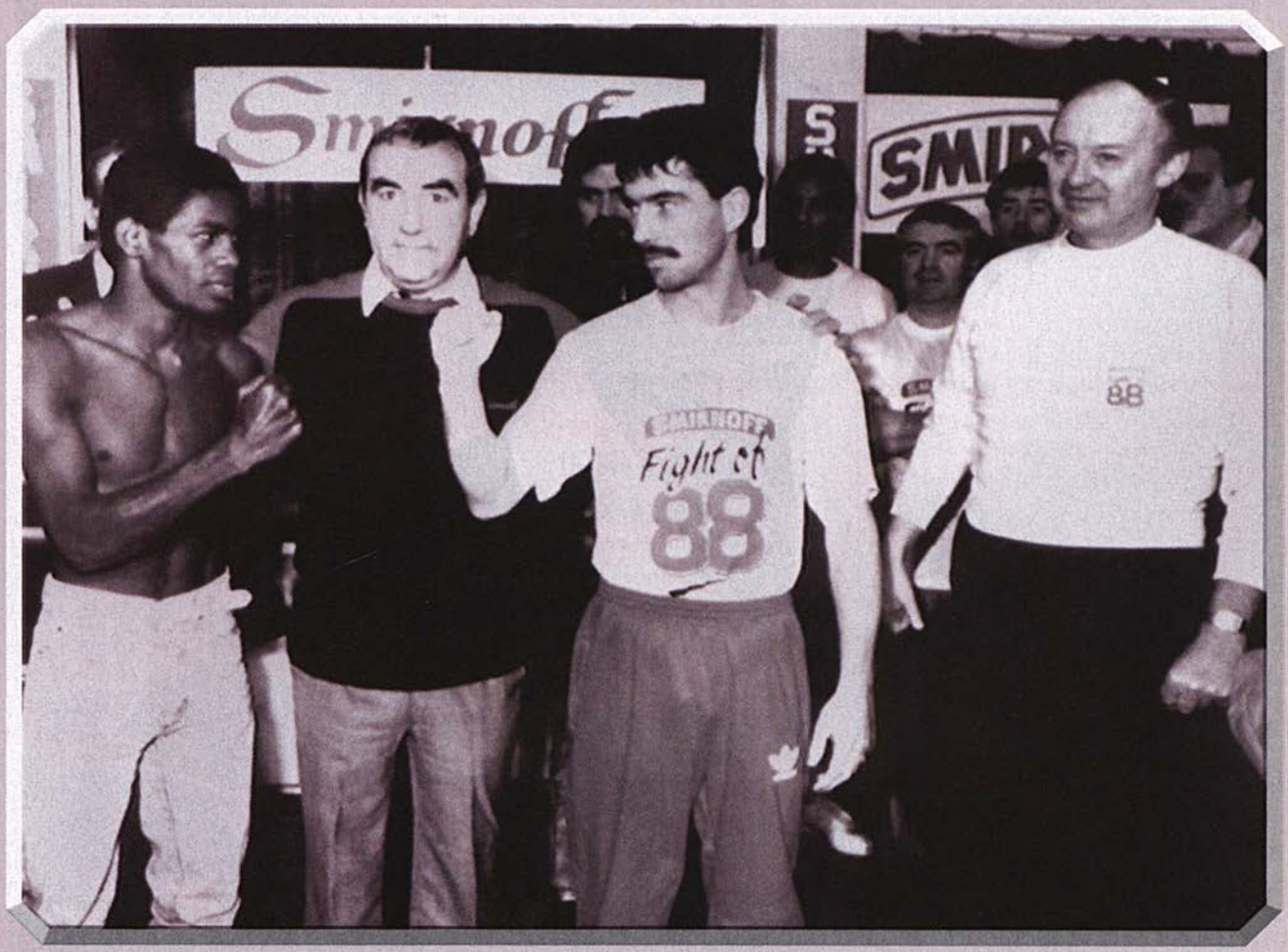
former WBA titleholder Zamora and Sandoval (nicknamed "Superfly" for his exploits at 112) served as the quintessential example of that era. This fight marked the 28-1 (21 KOs) Sandoval's first major step up in competition, and his speedy long-range boxing offered an excellent contrast to Zamora's two-fisted bombing, which had resulted in 30 knockouts in 30 wins against two losses. This was Zamora's second outing since losing his title to Jorge Lujan, and though it was rumored he was in poor condition, he scaled a fit 119¼ pounds to Sandoval's 118¾. The Olympic Auditorium was packed, and the match's drawing power was such that another 5,000 stood outside awaiting word of the result. The fireworks erupted midway in Round 2 and continued to detonate for the remainder of the contest, which boasted enough twists to fill a book the size of War and Peace.

FRANKIE DUARTE - ALBERT DAVILA II (JUNE 27, 1987)

This was a rare rematch that took place 10 years after the June 1977 WBC bantamweight title eliminator won by Davila by fifth-round TKO – and this was also the rare rematch that proved to be far superior in terms of two-way drama. Notably, this NABF title tilt also took place at 118 – a tribute to both men's dedication and conditioning – and the fight was made better by the fact that the 32-year-old Duarte was new and improved, thanks to his victorious battle over the substance abuse that afflicted him so profoundly during the first phase of his career. Also compelling was the contrast in styles – Davila the sage boxer and Duarte the gritty aggressor – as well as their mutual willingness to engage. This blood-soaked war televised by CBS had the Forum crowd in the palms of the fighters' four gloves – at least until the controversial conclusion.

KELVIN SEABROOKS - ERNIE CATALUNA (NOVEMBER 18, 1987)

Arturo Gatti and Matthew Saad Muhammad were celebrated for their consistently exciting fights as well as for their almost inhuman comeback capacity. Freddie Pendleton stands as the definitive example of a fighter who overcame a bad early record to become a world champion. Seabrooks, a native of Charlotte, North Carolina, boasted both of these traits in the first defense of his



Fidel Bassa (left) and Dave McAuley face off at the weigh-in for their dramatic flyweight title bout.

Alberto Davila and Frankie Duarte were fresh-faced youngsters ahead of their first fight in 1977, but the matchup was even better 10 years later when both were veterans.

IBF title, defeating 21-0 Frenchman Thierry Jacob in Paris on the Fourth of July in 1987 despite suffering three knockdowns and entering the ring with a 23-13 (18 KOs) record. His second defense came against Cataluna, a Filipino southpaw whose 25-4-7 (9 KOs) mark was hardly reason to be intimidated. But Cataluna seemed to draw strength from Seabrooks' story, and when the opening bell rang, he adopted a "what do I have to lose" attitude and gunned for title glory with all he had. Seabrooks, being Seabrooks, responded in kind. The fireworks that ensued would make this a true "Closet Classic" – and one that would be well worth your time to watch.

If I were to suggest even more bouts to sample, I would recommend Matthew Franklin-Marvin Johnson I, Joey Giardello-Gil Turner, Betulio Gonzalez-Martin Vargas, Danny Lopez-Ruben Olivares, Aaron Pryor-Dujuan Johnson, Antwun Echols-Charles Brewer, Victor Callejas-Loris Stecca II, Soo Hwan Hong-Hector Carrasquilla, Rafael Ruelas-Jorge Paez, Muangchai Kittikasem-Jung Koo Chang, Chan Hee Park-Guty Espadas, Merqui Sosa-Prince Charles Williams I, Elvir Muriqi-Sam Ahmad, Juan Coggi-Eder Gonzalez I (one of the most scandalous fights I've ever seen) and Danny Williams-Mark Potter. But even this expanded list only scratches the surface as far as the depth and breadth of thrilling fights boxing has to offer.

Cassidy ended the article by stating that "if that snowstorm ever hits, Noltimier will settle back into his favorite chair, open a bag of chips, pour a beverage, and cue up his favorite fight." Here's hoping that all of us boxing fans will follow that advice, and by watching these fights the time will pass even more quickly – and so much more enjoyably.

Lee Groves is a boxing writer and historian based in Friendly, West Virginia. He is a full member of the BWAA, from which he has won 18 writing honors, including first-place awards in 2011 and 2013. He has been an elector for the International Boxing Hall of Fame since 2001 and is also a writer, researcher and punch-counter for CompuBox, Inc. He is the author of Tales from the Vault: A Celebration of 100 Boxing Closet Classics *and the co-author of* Muhammad Ali: By the Numbers. *Contact Groves at l.groves@frontier.com or via Facebook.*

BATTLE PLAN: VASILIY LOMACHENKO VS. TEOFIMO LOPEZ

TWO TRAINERS BREAK DOWN THE HIGHLY ANTICIPATED LIGHTWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP, WHICH WILL PIT TECHNICAL WIZARDRY AGAINST TALENT-DRIVEN PUNCHING POWER

By **Michael Montero**

Whenever Vasiliy Lomachenko (14-1, 10 KOs) and Teofimo Lopez (15-0, 12 KOs) finally square off in the ring, it will become the focus point of the boxing world. The fight had been tentatively set for May 30 in New York until the global COVID-19 pandemic KO'd the boxing schedule, but Top Rank still plans on doing the lightweight unification bout later this year. The Ukrainian star, currently No. 2 on The Ring's pound-for-pound list, will put his Ring, WBA and WBO lightweight titles on the line, while the youngster from Brooklyn will make the first defense of his IBF belt.

To help analyze the matchup, The Ring sought out two outstanding trainers, Stephen "Breadman" Edwards of Philadelphia and Johnathon Banks of Detroit's famed Kronk Gym. Breadman, who trains former unified junior middleweight titleholder Julian Williams, broke down how Lomachenko can knock off the undefeated Lopez. Banks, who trained former heavyweight champion Wladimir Klitschko and currently works with middleweight titleholder Gennadiy Golovkin, told us how Lopez can score the upset over Lomachenko.

STEPHEN EDWARDS, ON HOW HE WOULD TRAIN LOMACHENKO:

Vasiliy Lomachenko is so conditioned and well-prepared with his training that it would be an insult to his father/trainer to say I would add anything. He does mental stimulation drills, which are as important as physical drills. His cardio is on point with his rollerblading. He dances. He works on grappling. He's much stronger than he looks. Loma is one of the best-conditioned fighters I've ever seen. He consistently wears down his opponents, physically and mentally.

Many times, what the media calls a "game plan" is a series of drills that a fighter does in camp to offset the flaws or tendencies of their opponents. After an elite fighter feels something in his opponent, he will try to exploit it and make the opponent adjust to it. Some of the things I've seen in Lopez is he's an offbeat attacker. He sort of shocks you with his brutal power attacks. I would assume that Loma would want to make those attacks predictable. The way he can do that is to put Lopez on the defensive. Usually when a fighter is attacked and he's giving up points, he becomes prideful and tries to get those points back. Which can be predictable.

I have noticed that Lopez stands in a shoulder-roll stance. This favors Lomachenko. Loma will feint and attempt to get behind Lopez's lead left shoulder. If he can do that, he will most likely win the fight. A big factor in this fight is if Loma can get to the side or behind Lopez and/or if Lopez can keep Loma in front of him and line him up for big power shots.

As far as a Plan B or C, I think Loma has to feel Lopez out first. He has to figure out who is stronger, how good Lopez's stamina is and at what range his punches carry the most steam. After he feels him out, I believe Loma will adjust accordingly. But you never really know until two men line up and fight. I suspect that Loma will want this fight at close quarters once he gets warmed up, to smother Lopez's power a little bit.

Teofimo Lopez is an uber talent. I don't see many things that I would call weaknesses. But I do think he's stressed out with all of the things in his personal life that have been reported. Fighting Lomachenko is stressful enough. This is as high as you can go as far as level of competition. If he's not in a proper state mentally, he's in trouble.

Sometimes experience can be overrated, in my opinion. Take Lopez vs. Commey (last December at Madison Square Garden), for example. Richard Commey came into that fight with more experience, but it didn't mean much because Lopez was more talented. In the case of Loma vs. Lopez, I do believe that if Lopez doesn't clip Loma early, experience will definitely play a factor. The stress of having to be on point for 36 minutes with a fighter that caliber is rough. You don't realize it until you get in there with him. That is why Loma wins a higher percentage of the later rounds in his fights. His talent slowly separates him from his opponent.

For as good as Lopez is, I observed that he doesn't jab much (landing only around four jabs per round, according to CompuBox research). He uses it as more of a rangefinder for his power shots. It has worked for him so far, but I think you can break Loma's rhythm with a jab. Luke Campbell and Jorge Linares both used good jabs to trouble Loma. I don't want to call it a weakness for Lopez yet, because no one has exploited it so far, but this is something to look for.

I view this fight as a 55-45 fight in favor of Lomachenko. I really believe Lopez is a live dog and he can knock Loma out, but doing it will be difficult and I favor Loma ever so slightly. Lopez is a lot bigger than Loma naturally. He's squeezing down to make the 135-pound lightweight division limit, whereas Loma can still make the 130-pound (junior lightweight) limit. Lopez will one day be a welterweight, so there is a big difference in physicality. That matters in close, competitive fights.

I also feel that Loma is still in his prime but not at his peak. When a high-energy pressure fighter is no longer at his peak and fighting above

his natural weight, he will have struggles. We've been witnessing Loma struggle slightly before our eyes in some recent fights, but not everyone wants to acknowledge it. Lopez and his father/trainer must see something in order to take this fight so soon.

Manny Pacquiao and Roman Gonzalez were at the same place as Loma in recent losses, fighting above their best weight and past their peaks yet still in their primes. They can still be great. They can still win big fights. But the consistent domination from fight to fight is no longer there. Watch Loma's last few fights closely. He has slipped a little, but he was so much better than everyone else that his slip still makes him no worse than No. 2 in a pound-for-pound sense.

This will be a very intriguing fight for both men, but again I favor Lomachenko by decision.

JOHNATHON BANKS, ON HOW HE WOULD TRAIN LOPEZ:

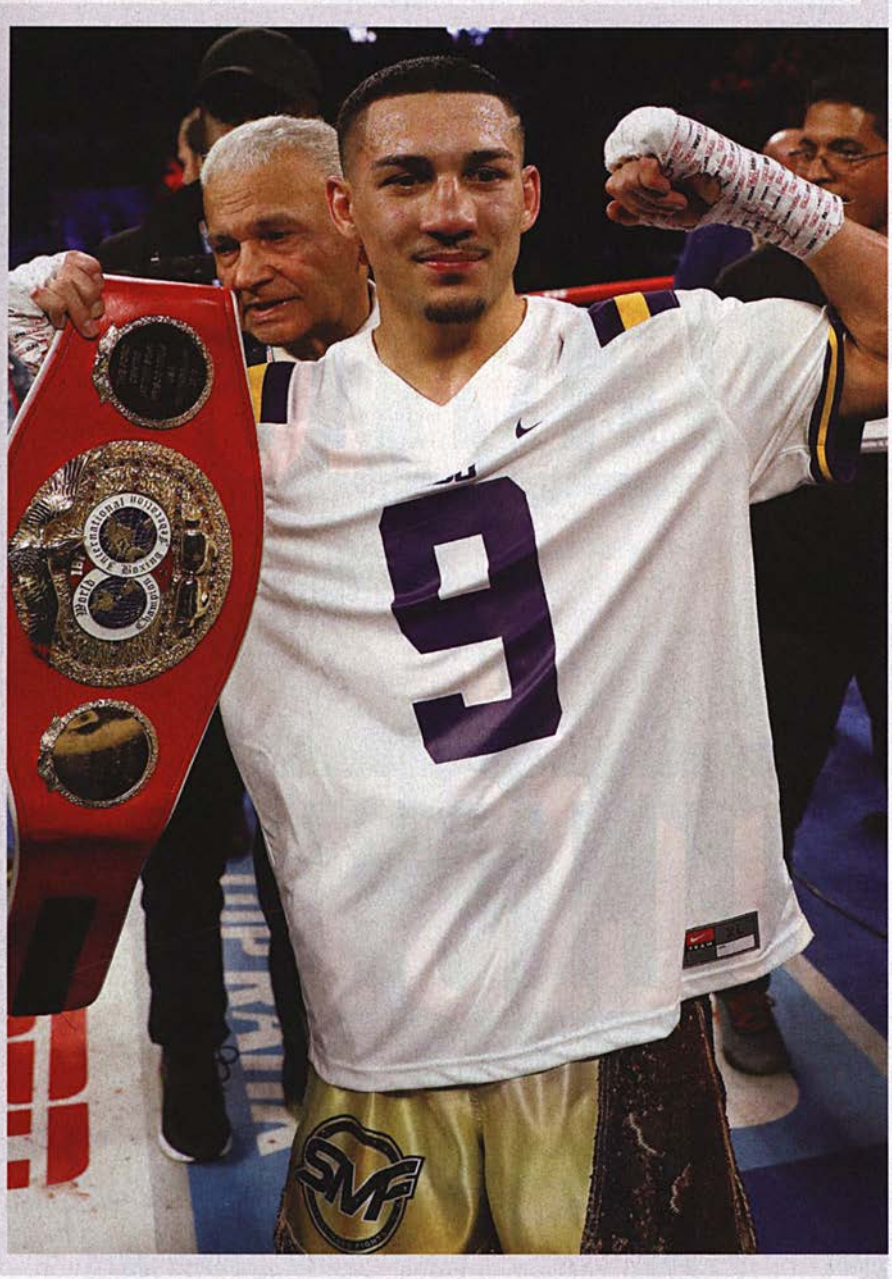
Lomachenko is a difficult fighter to prepare for. He does a lot of moving and his punch volume is high. If I were preparing Teofimo Lopez, I would tell him to increase his punch output and to punch with Loma rather than waiting for him to finish before you punch.

This whole quarantine thing due to coronavirus wouldn't change anything in regards to preparation. Once we open camp, we open camp – that's it. But we would have to game plan specifically for all the little things that Loma does. What you want to do with a special fighter like that is try to present any type of problems for him that you can.

THE COMBATANTS

VASILIY LOMACHENKO

Record: 14-1 (10 KOs)
Age: 32
Height: 5 feet 7 inches
Reach: 65½ inches
Location: Born in Ukraine, lives in California
Trainer: Anatoly Lomachenko
Titles held: WBO featherweight; WBO junior lightweight; Ring/WBA/WBO lightweight (current)
Last fight: UD 12 Luke Campbell (118-109, 119-108, 119-108)
Notes: Two-time Olympic gold medalist; loss on his record was an ambitious title shot in his second pro fight against Orlando Salido, an experienced, unapologetically rough brawler who came in more than two pounds over the featherweight limit.



TEOFIMO LOPEZ

Record: 15-0 (12 KOs)
Age: 22
Height: 5 feet 8 inches
Reach: 68½ inches
Location: Born in Brooklyn, lives in Brooklyn
Trainer: Teofimo Lopez Sr.
Titles held: IBF lightweight (current)
Last fight: TKO 2 Richard Commey
Notes: The Ring's 2018 Prospect of the Year; bursting at the seams at lightweight; his demolition of Commey cured the doubts many had after a relatively uninspiring unanimous decision over Masayoshi Nakatani.

Lopez will have to make it an up-close and personal fight from bell one. The more distance you give a mover like Loma, who's a rhythm fighter, the more at ease he will be. Loma wants to move and do his pivots and turns and keep his rhythm. If Lopez can disrupt that rhythm, he'll have a great chance to win. While he has to increase his punch volume, he also has to maintain a defensive presence while coming toward Loma. I get that Lopez is the bigger guy, but if he just tries to walk Loma down, he's only going to make him look better. Teofimo can't let Loma be the only guy who is punching and fighting in rhythm.

Lopez has to not only be first, but punch with Lomachenko when he tries to move. That will cut down on Loma's movement. Most guys don't punch right when Lomachenko is punching or moving; they wait until he's done and then they try to find him, but he's already gone. That's not going to work.

If you look at the history of boxing, fighters who are movers have always been the hardest style to contend with. Everybody tries to hit them after they stop punching. But by the time a mover is done punching, they're gone, they're out of range. You're punching air, and then you're getting countered. Movement is the hardest thing to deal with in the sport, and that's one of Loma's best strengths. He has a very good ring awareness and an ability to move in, out and around his opponent. Lopez can negate all of that by increasing his offensive output and keeping the fight on the inside.

If Lopez can't contain Loma's movement, he's not going to be able to connect, and it will be a long night. At the same time, if Loma is not at his best, especially with him being the smaller guy, then Lopez could pull off what many would consider an upset.

Michael Montero can be found on YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram via @MonteroOnBoxing. His weekly podcast 'The Neutral Corner' can be heard on iTunes, Spotify, iHeartRadio and elsewhere.

PANDEMICS AND PUGILISTS

THE COVID-19 SHUTDOWN IS BEYOND THE SCALE OF ANYTHING SEEN BEFORE IN BOXING, BUT IT ISN'T THE FIRST TIME AN OUTBREAK HAS AFFECTED THE SPORT

By **Don Stradley**

When the "original" Jack Dempsey, the great middleweight known as "The Nonpareil," boarded the Canadian Pacific train out of Vancouver on a summer day in 1895, the other passengers kept their distance. With his pale skin and bloodshot eyes, he would've looked conspicuous in any era, but to people of that time it was obvious that he had tuberculosis. Drifting in and out of consciousness, he survived the ride and made it back to his family home in Portland, Oregon.

His wife, Maggie, put on a brave face while speaking to reporters. This was difficult, since they were arriving from all parts of the country. Dempsey had been one of the most popular fighters of his time, and the press eyed his condition like vultures.

Dempsey was 32, and his health had been failing for months. Once in his home, he stayed in a dimly lit room where he slept and withered away. According to the Buffalo Courier, "violent attacks of coughing threatened to carry him off at any moment."

Eventually, the same disease that had taken his father killed him. Dempsey's death inspired an outpouring of tributes and even poetry. Making less news was the death of his wife three years later, also from tuberculosis.

Pandemics and epidemics have affected boxing since the earliest days of the business. The current global crisis may feel as if it erupted without precedent, but over the past century there have been many similar situations.

The cancellation of various events, the death of longtime boxing writer Ron Ross and the passing of Anthony Yarde's father in March and grandmother in early April, all from COVID-19, have created a darkening sense of history repeating itself.

The tuberculosis that killed Dempsey was part of a boom in American "TB" cases that lasted through the 1940s. According to one report, by the beginning of the 19th century, TB had killed one in seven of all people who had ever lived. Joe Gans, the great lightweight (and first African American boxing champion), died from it in 1910 at age 35.

Gans revealed he was ill weeks after his final bout in March 1909. Doctors advised him to go to Arizona, where the altitude and dry air was supposed to cure him – his old rival, Battling Nelson, even offered Gans the use of his Phoenix ranch – but he spent his final days in isolation at the Baltimore home of his foster parents. Gans' final public appearance was at the nearby Gayety Theater, where Nelson was being honored. Gans spoke briefly to the audience about Nelson's prowess – Nelson had beaten him in two of three bouts – and then left the stage. Their parting, wrote the Brooklyn Union, was "most pathetic. Both were crying."

On his deathbed, Gans purportedly confessed that some of his fights had been fixed. Perhaps because his thoughts were skewed by his illness, he'd forgotten that he'd made the same confession four years prior. A few weeks later, he was interred at the Mount Auburn Cemetery, the United Press describing the funeral cortege as "one of the largest ever seen in this vicinity." TB would take down other boxers in the coming years, including Jim Driscoll, Rudy Unholz, Justo Suarez and Pinky Burns.

Influenza, or the "Spanish flu," tore through the world from 1918 to late 1920. Though the outbreak lasted almost three years, it's greatest impact on American boxing appeared to be in October and November of 1918. During that period, many boxing shows and other sporting events were postponed. Among the 50 million or more fatalities were some notable boxers of the day, including Matty Baldwin, Al Thomas and Joe Stein. Among the pugs who fell ill but survived were Valentine Braunheim, better known as "Knockout" Brown; heavyweight contender Bill Brennan; and former heavyweight champions Tommy Burns and James J. Jeffries.

Not all stories from the 1918 pandemic were scary. Just eight years after he had mourned the death of Gans, Battling Nelson was hospitalized with influenza. From his sickbed, he made a public plea to anyone who owed him money to please pay up. He was adamant that he didn't want donations, but simply hoped his old pals would pay back money owed so he could settle his medical bills. After more than

$1,000 came in, Nelson claimed he hadn't been broke at all but had used his illness as a way to shake up his deadbeat friends. Within a month, he was touring Northwest Europe with his new bride. Had he even been sick?

Another humorous episode from that era involved heavyweight Willie Meehan. When he failed to show up for a scheduled bout, his excuse was that he couldn't raise carfare. Willie claimed he had wandered the streets looking for a buddy who might help, but as he explained to the San Francisco Examiner, "With the flu masks, I can't recognize anyone I know..."

Indeed, flu masks were ever-present in 1918, and in some cases boxing fans were ordered to wear them while attending fights. To disregard the rule could result in a fine of $50, and any arena that allowed customers in without masks was at risk of being closed by the police. Enterprising promoters had a solution: They began selling flu masks at the door.

Kid McCoy had retired from boxing, but by 1918 he was promoting himself as a physical culture expert. McCoy was so certain he could cure influenza that he wanted the San Francisco mayor to set him up with a laboratory. His plan was to create special "electric cabinets" to be filled with steam and eucalyptus oil. The idea was that patients would sit in these cabinets until the flu was baked out of them. Though he failed to impress the mayor, McCoy appointed himself as a sort of one-man avenger against influenza, creating pamphlets with health tips to be handed out at his personal appearances.

Leave it to McCoy to stand up to a scourge that was as terrifying as anything the world had seen. According to John M. Barry, author of The Great Influenza, the pandemic of 1918 was far more devastating than the "Black Death" of the Middle Ages. Barry wrote, "even in Philadelphia, as modern a city as existed in the world, priests would drive horse-drawn wagons down the streets, calling upon

Tommy Morrison's boxing career was derailed when he tested HIV-positive prior to a fight in 1996.

those behind doors shut tight in terror to bring out their dead."

The HIV/AIDS epidemic of the 1980s certainly took a toll on boxing. Since the disease could be contracted through blood, the sport incorporated many helpful changes. Cornermen, ringside doctors and referees were now required to wear gloves, while boxers were to be tested annually. Because many states didn't require HIV testing until the mid-'90s or later, there were scandals involving infected fighters who chose to fight in states – or countries – that weren't following the protective guidelines. There were even incidents where infected fighters tried to have a "clean" person take the test for them.

Perhaps the biggest boxing name to die of AIDS was Esteban De Jesus, best known for his three-fight rivalry with Roberto Duran. While in prison for murder, De Jesus' health deteriorated. He was transferred to an abandoned milk factory in Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico, that had been turned into a rehab facility. Duran visited him just days before he died. "When I set eyes on him, I felt so sorry for him," Duran wrote in his memoir, I Am Duran. "He was so skinny and frail, and must have weighed less than a hundred pounds." The hug they shared was photographed and seen in newspapers around the world. The image of Duran embracing the sick De Jesus was important at a time when the virus was still mysterious and misunderstood.

When Tommy Morrison was diagnosed with HIV in 1996, he went from candidly admitting that he had it to saying his tests were not conclusive. Morrison returned to boxing a decade later for two more bouts in locations that didn't require blood tests. Still denying his illness, he claimed he'd been the victim of a conspiracy. His mother set the record straight in

2013, telling ESPN that Morrison not only had AIDS but also was "in the end stages." He died shortly after. Morrison's death certificate didn't mention AIDS or HIV, though he died of complications associated with AIDS.

When one saw 1930s featherweight Alberto "Baby" Arizmendi, he was a bright character usually on the arm of some Hollywood starlet. He was so carefree that it was hard to believe he'd spent part of his childhood struggling with polio.

The polio epidemic first hit America in the 1890s and was generally strongest in warm climates. It could be fatal, could strike anyone regardless of age and often left victims without full use of their limbs.

When Arizmendi recovered, his right hand was near useless. Still, he found himself drawn to boxing and by his mid-teens was fighting professionally. Arizmendi would have more than 120 professional bouts, including a quintet of fights with Henry Armstrong. He fought the best featherweights and lightweights of the 1930s and was intermittently recognized as featherweight champion in New York and California. That he won so many fights with a barely working right hand is one of the small miracles of boxing lore.

Though it's not regarded alongside the more notorious epidemics, one of the menacing ailments of the early 1900s was typhoid fever. A bacterial disease spread among humans in various ways, typhoid took the life of such boxers as Paul Kohler, Tommy Hogan and Joe McGowan. Their names may not mean much in 2020, but they'd all been professionals who fought in front of packed houses. Kohler, a 23-year-old welterweight from Cleveland, was especially promising, having already held his own in bouts with Packey McFarland and Willie Richie.

Few fights made headlines like James J. Corbett's victory over John L. Sullivan in September 1892. But news of Corbett's win had to share space with reports of European steamships docking in New York bearing cholera

Joe Gans (right) squares off against Battling Nelson just two years prior to dying of tuberculosis.

victims. The horror stories included burials at sea, while one German ship, the Scandia, reached America with more than 30 dead bodies onboard.

In the days of Sullivan and Corbett, it was believed that fighters were vulnerable to diseases because the abuse they took in the ring weakened their bodies. Dempsey, for instance, believed a blow to the chest from Bob Fitzsimmons had brought on his consumption.

There was also a lot of talk that fighters were susceptible to fatal illnesses because of the broken noses they'd received from boxing. Forced to become mouth-breathers, they were supposedly inhaling greater amounts of germs than if they could breathe through the nose.

Ben Hogan, a former prizefighter turned evangelist, went on a tour of speaking engagements in the 1880s, mesmerizing audiences with tales of boxers and the sicknesses they incurred. A newspaper interview he did in 1882 was filled with references to fighters dying from "disease brought on by their injuries."

The story was published throughout the country and included enough morbid imagery to frighten anyone away from the ring. According to Hogan, fighters were ending up in sick wards and asylums, stricken by everything from tuberculosis to leprosy, including one poor chap, Bob Riddle, who died in the prime of his life, "the flesh dropping off his fingers."

And Hogan wasn't even around for the influenza outbreak.

There is no telling how long our current health crisis will last or how soon the boxing business can return to some sort of normalcy. Will we see arenas full of fans wearing masks? We don't know. But everything we're seeing now has happened in the past.

Here's to the future.

MYTHICAL MATCHUPS:

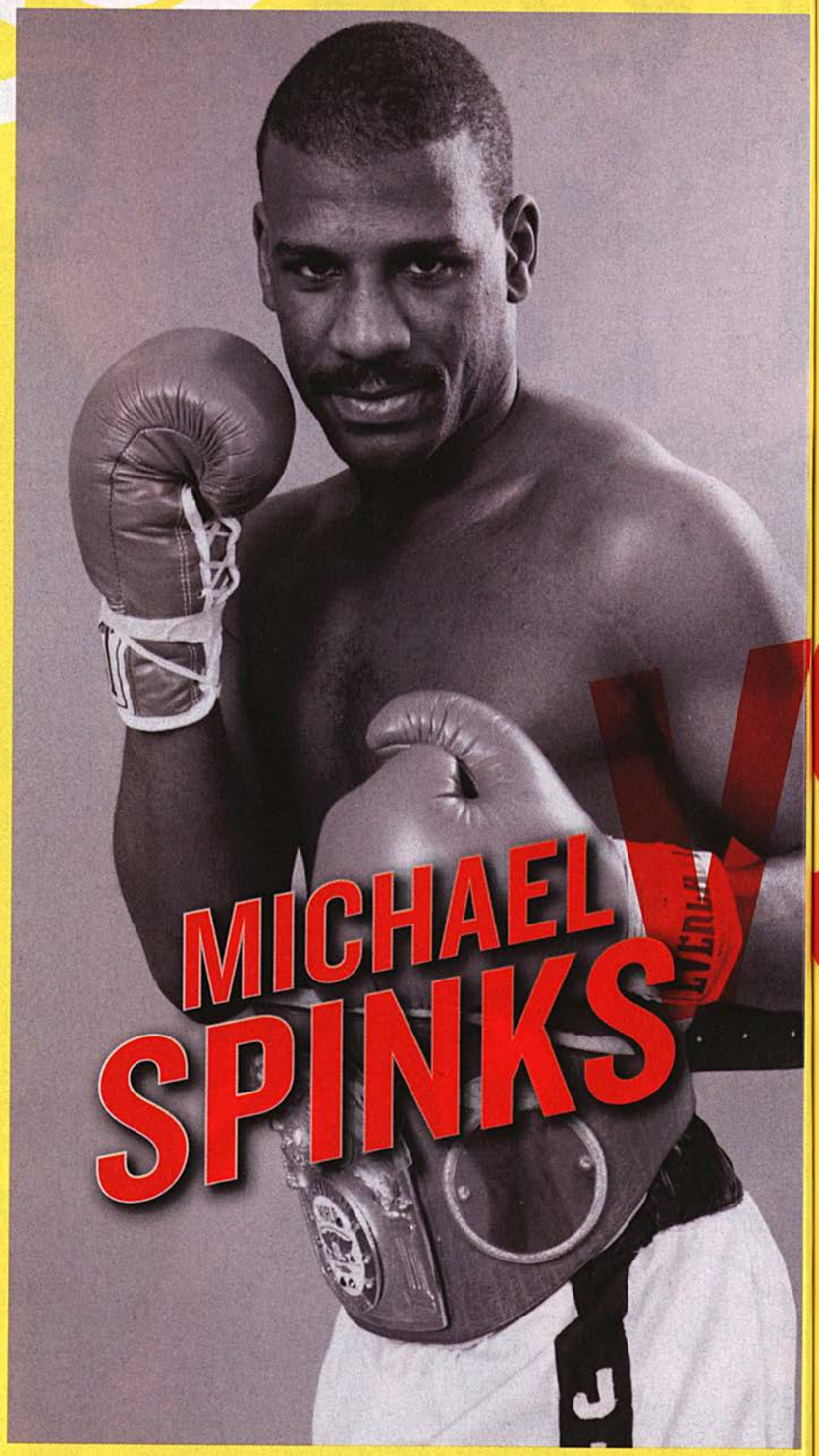
By **Michael Marley**

This is the second of an ongoing series by special guests, many of whom are not professional writers but are from other parts of the boxing world – boxers, sparring partners, trainers, matchmakers, referees, photographers, historians – each with unique knowledge and insight into the participants, each with his or her own style of presenting the dream bout.

Our guest is Michael Marley, whose involvement in boxing began with starting a Cassius Clay fan club as a 12-year-old in Boston. Since then, the New York-based lawyer has experienced boxing from several perspectives over five decades. A former collegiate amateur boxer, Marley has been a producer for Howard Cosell at ABC, the boxing columnist for the New York Post, a publicist for Don King Promotions, and he's even managed pro boxers, including Terry Norris, Shannon Briggs and Robert Garcia.

Author's Note: Despite starting the International Cassius Clay Fan Club, some of his classmates and boxing teammates at the University of Nevada doubted Marley really "knew" the champ.

Then Muhammad Ali came to Lake Tahoe to fight Bob Foster, and Marley brought Wolf Pack athletes and pals to a workout, where they met Ali, Angelo Dundee and Bundini Brown. Marley was not selling "wolf tickets." As far as ring skills, Marley wore white shoes and floated like a butterfly but stung like a moth.



Michael Spinks, who upset Larry Holmes for the heavyweight title in 1985, is an all-time great light heavyweight.

BOB FOSTER

Bobby Goodman literally was weaned on boxing.

As an affable pre-teenager, Goodman tagged along with his publicist father, Murray, from one boxing hotspot to another.

Starting about 1948, he was a daily presence in the training camps of such fistic icons as Sugar Ray Robinson, Marcel Cerdan, Joe Louis and Rocky Marciano. He studied left hooks more ardently than he did history books.

Bobby was fluent in boxing before he could get a driver's license and went on to work for bombastic promoter Don King, besides being a personal flack for Foster and Ken Norton.

In later years, he ran a vibrant fight program at Madison Square Garden.

Today at age 81, "BG Match" (his internet handle) is retired, in New Jersey, and has been enshrined in every boxing hall of fame imaginable.

Goodman does not hesitate for even a nanosecond in predicting this Ring Mythical Matchup.

In a 2003 special issue, The Ring rated Bob Foster as No. 17 on the all-time hardest hitter list while Michael Spinks came in at No. 42.

"Bob knocks Michael out in four rounds," Goodman said. "Spinks was a decent boxer, but Foster was a freak of nature. He was close to 6-foot-4 in height and he had those long arms, 79-inch reach, and a snakelike jab, which he used to set up the right hand.

"Once, in Massachusetts, I saw Bob wreck a heavyweight named Sylvester Dullaire (in sparring) with one big shot despite the big

Bob Foster is one of the best 175-pound champs ever and one of the greatest punchers of all time.

gloves and headgear. They had to take Dullaire to the hospital, as we thought his head could've been split wide open. The only light heavyweight I would rank as high as Bobby would be Archie Moore, a different type of cat himself."

Goodman saw Foster's ring resilience against brawler Frankie DePaula (later a Mob murder victim) at Madison Square Garden.

"Frankie decked him in Round 1 and it just pissed Bobby off. He blasted DePaula out in the (same) round."

I always wondered if Foster ever worked in a bomb factory, or was that just boxing bluster due to his considerable hitting power.

"No, Bob did work in York, Pennsylvania, in a munitions factory; he lived in Washington, D.C., when he got out of the army and did factory work," Goodman said. "Later, Bob moved to New Mexico and got into law enforcement as a sheriff."

When a training day was done, publicist and prizefighter often went additional "rounds" at the nearest bar.

"Oh, yeah," Goodman said. "Bob trained hard and partied hard as well."

Goodman said the Muhammad Ali-Foster fight in 1972 at Lake Tahoe was designed to set up what turned out to be the Ali-Norton trilogy.

What I recall as a reporter (Nevada State Journal) at that time is in harmony with Goodman's recollection.

There was a fraternal feel to the show, and Ali played jokes and pranks before he dribbled Foster, 41 pounds lighter, off the ring mat seven times.

Or, as biting scribe Jim Murray (L.A. Times) described the physical mismatch, "Foster was down more times than a ship with a drunken crew."

One historical footnote is that Foster drew blood, making it the only time that someone other than a barber cut The Greatest.

Bob and Muhammad were always convivial.

"Ali liked Bob; there was no hate. They knew each other from their amateur days and mentioned Allen Hudson, who I think they both fought as kids, " Goodman said. "A co-feature saw Kenny (Norton) stop Henry Clark in an eliminator. Ali said he was glad that Bob could not pack on 10 additional pounds, because he punched so hard."

As for the amusing runup to the bout at Harrah's Tahoe, singer Isaac Hayes and comic Bill Cosby came to training sessions, with Cosby playfully teasing Ali that Foster would KO him in five rounds.

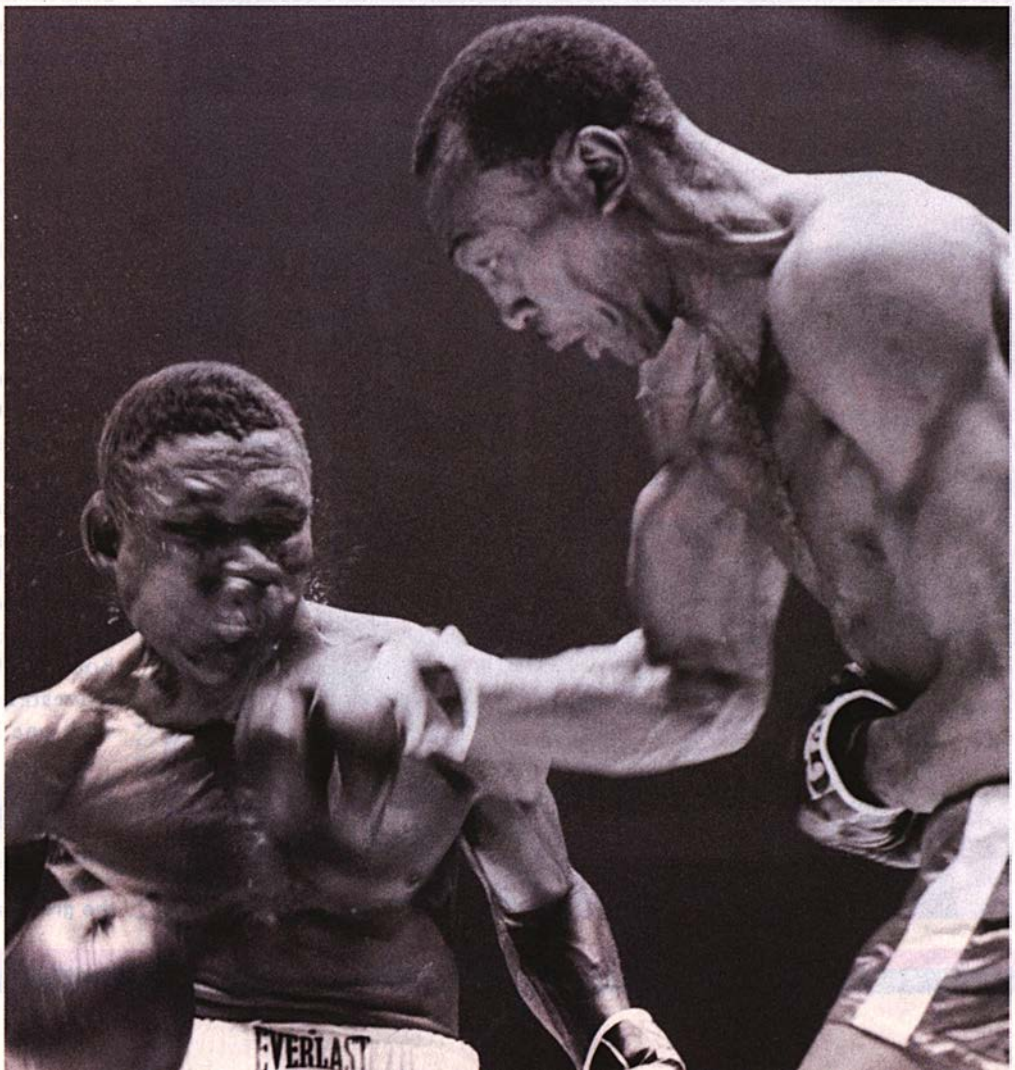
Upon his Nevada arrival, someone asked Ali if he liked the site, and truthfully Ali did not know the venue was in Stateline, hugging icy Lake Tahoe and the California border.

"I don't know the name," Ali said, "I just know it is a one-horse town."

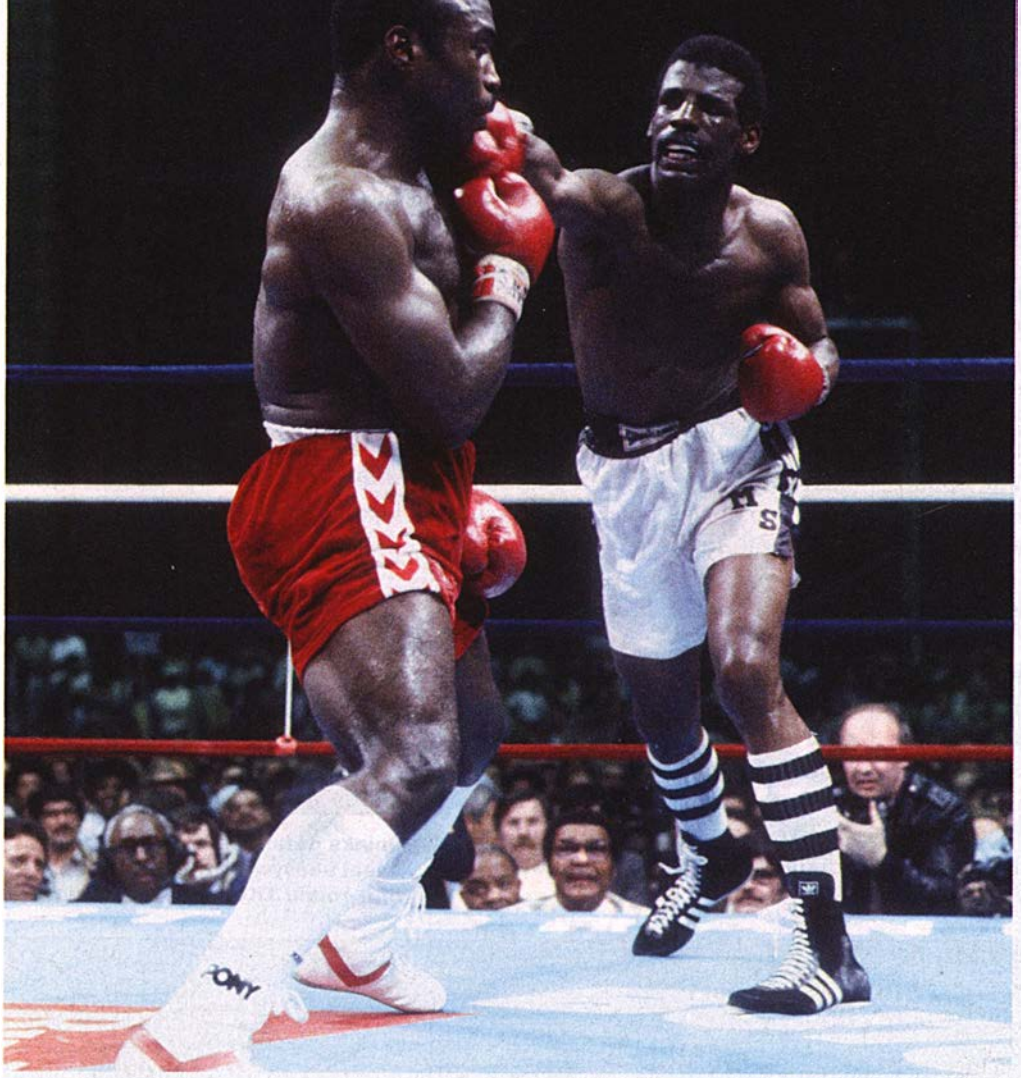
The card took place on November 21, with a tiny ringside ticket price of $150.

(Ironically, the Ali-Frazier megafight on March 8, 1971, was the same price but tickets were wickedly scalped. They didn't label Joe and Mo "The Fight" for nothing.)

Ali was paid a modest $250,000 while a grateful Foster got half as



Foster's frightening punching power was on full display with his light heavyweight title-winning KO of Dick Tiger.



Spinks puts "the Jinx" on Dwight Muhammad Qawi en route to unifying 175-pound titles.

much.

Eager to hype the show, Ali asked for an oxygen tank to be permitted in his fight night corner so he wouldn't be hampered by the mile-high altitude. Foster wouldn't mind, the Ali camp said, because Foster lived and trained in the similar altitude of Albuquerque, New Mexico. The Nevada commission nixed the request and it was Foster who ran out of gas.

The boxing board also put the kibosh on Foster's plea for a small, 16-foot ring. But the breathing apparatus angle brought me, Boy Reporter, a little scoop.

One Vegas sportsbook adjusted its odds, dropping Ali from a 12-5 number to a slight 7-5 favorite. The odds looked silly in Round 5 when Foster was dropped four times.

Ref Mills Lane, in his first big assignment, let them continue, but Foster didn't even hurt Muhammad's feelings.

The weight disparity became more onerous with each passing round. A playful Ali feigned being hurt, doing a wobbly, knee-knocking panic, but no one, least of all Foster, was fooled. Ali did don sunglasses after the fight to mask a cut around his left eye.

Trainer Dundee was nonplussed.

"It shows you that he can bleed," Dundee said.

Goodman winced as Foster suffered beatings from Ali, Smokin' Joe Frazier and other bigger men, but said Foster flustered Frazier in their opening round.

"Joe got clipped good by Bob and went back to his corner a bit frustrated. Frazier said as much to handler Yank Durham."

"Joe, you gotta go get this guy," Durham snapped between rounds. "You gotta get into his pants."

The fight was mercifully over in Round 2 as relentless pressure and sweeping left hooks overcame stringbean Foster.

For bigger paydays, Foster took his lumps. He had eight victories in a row before he faced Ali and had cleaned out the 175-pound weight class. He was the class of that class, making 14 defenses from 1968 to 1974.

Other Big Boy losses were to the difficult 6-foot-6 Ernie Terrell and tricky Zora Folley.

In his heavyweight adventures, Foster was outweighed by an average of 21 pounds. Ali nemesis Doug Jones, a contender at both light heavyweight and heavyweight, also posted a victory over Foster in his 10th pro bout. Rugged Peruvian light heavy Mauro Mina handed Foster his second pro loss (13th pro bout) in Peru. However, Foster went on to defeat every light heavyweight he faced after the Mina bout until being held to a controversial draw with Jorge Ahumada in his final title fight in the division.

MICHAEL SPINKS

If there have ever been two world champion boxing brothers more different in ring style and general temperament than Leon and Michael Spinks, I can't cite any, although Bruce and Donald Curry come close.

Leon, who I nicknamed "Neon Leon" for his deep love of nightlife, was a down-and-dirty brawler who could also box stylishly, but he disfavored such tactics.

To Michael, the "Spinks Jinx" meant a persistent jab, disciplined

juking-and-jiving footwork and other ring generalship. At 175 pounds, Michael had a decent punch, but not so much against actual heavyweights.

Michael had four million (his purse) reasons to accept bigger-but-faded Gerry Cooney (whom he knocked out in five rounds) as a foe and 13.5 million reasons to take on Mike Tyson. Their Atlantic City bout lasted all of 91 seconds, but don't think Spinks went into this horsewhipping blindly.

Summing up Tyson before their fight, Michael called the other Michael what Tyson was at that point: "totally awesome."

Tyson was furious when he learned of Spinks' rich purse, but Don King joked about it and credited Spinks handler Butch Lewis.

"There is a new science in boxing," King cackled, "it is called Butchology, and it is when you fight the guy who got all three world title belts and you got no belts and you demand 13.5 million dollars. They are studying this marvelous new science." (Spinks was in fact the Ring/lineal champion.)

Turning his attention to starchy Tyson co-manager Bill Cayton, King labeled him "a despicable cad."

Speaking of Lewis, he added fuel to Tyson's ire and fire by griping about how Tyson was handwrapped. The irritated Iron Mike then punched a cannonball size hole in a dressing room wall before punching holes in poor Spinks' cranium.

Try as I might, I can't see Michael having an answer for Foster's gloved dynamite.

Result, longer than Spinks-Tyson but not by much. Foster by KO 1, duration 101 seconds.

That's the long and short of it.

Two all-time division giants who challenged big bruisers but tell the truth.

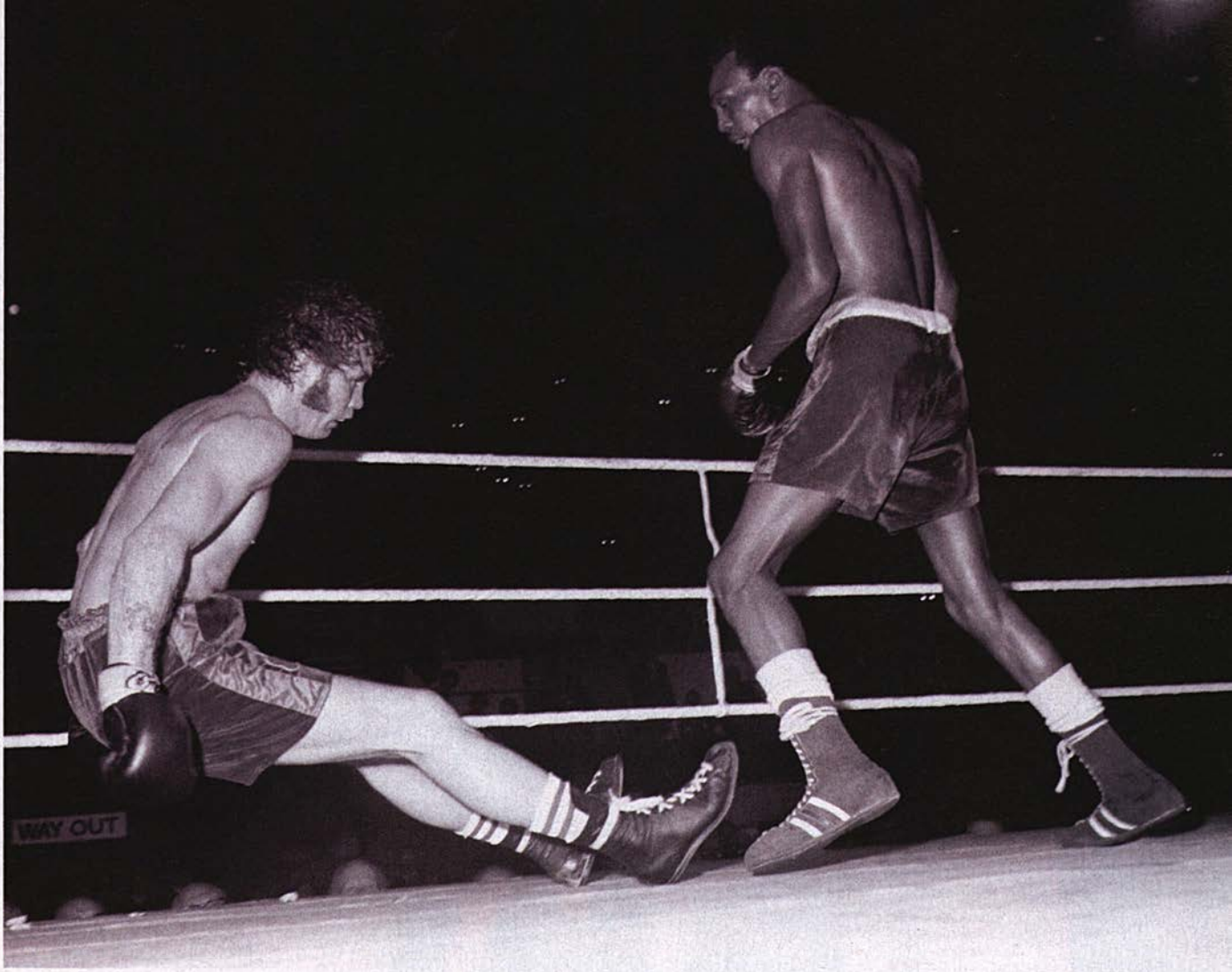
Both Foster and Michael would get crushed by mammoth supersized heavies such as Mr. Fury and Mr. Wilder, but it does not diminish their brilliance where they belonged ... at 175 pounds.

GRIZZLED BOXING FIGURES TELL US

In all fairness, I decided to check in with two other longtime boxing figures to see if either or both disagreed with me and Goodman.

Ron Weathers is a colorful rascal who plotted George Foreman's wildly successful comeback. He now lives near New Orleans. He's owned a strip joint, sold gently used cars to

Spinks defended the Ring and lineal heavyweight titles with a fifth-round TKO of Gerry Cooney.



Foster stalks Chris Finnegan after dropping the challenger in the 14th round of their title bout.

widows and always made promoter Bob Arum laugh out loud with various shenanigans.

Jim "Catfish" Hunter never played Major League Baseball but was a boxing writer for the Las Vegas Sun before turning to boxing PR and real estate. Hunter has been around Vegas for four decades and once wore Elvis Presley's best bejeweled jumpsuit. And Hunter has photos from the Las Vegas Hilton to prove it.

RON WEATHERS

"I like Michael Spinks against Bob Foster. I know that at my semi-advanced age I'm supposed to favor Foster. But I think Spinks would outwork him and take a decision.

"Sure, Foster had a great right hand, but I always considered him to be a bit vulnerable to the body; he was 6-foot-3, and that's a lot of space to cover up and protect.

"That said, Spinks wasn't the biggest hitter nor the slickest boxer, but he was focused and relentless, and that would be just enough for him to get inside, work hard and take a close decision against Foster."

JIM HUNTER

"Bob Foster. Every day of the week and twice on Sunday. His right was one of the best ever in the light heavyweight division. His reach of 79 inches was longer than most heavyweight champions. That combination is enough for him to beat Michael Spinks.

"Spinks was a game and determined fighter, but he didn't have the power or shiftiness necessary to keep Foster off him. This is a classic example of physical prowess being too much for heart and spirit."

POST-FIGHT QUOTES

SPINKS SAYS: "I got tagged with a triple left hook. This guy is deceptively strong. I can see how he kept the title for so long; he packs something explosive in those fists. His jab is as good as Holmes' jab but not as powerful. I was caught cold; I was more dazed than stone-cold knocked out. Bob is a real good fighter."

FOSTER SAYS: "I finally got some justice in the heavyweight class. It looked easy, but after Frazier and Ali, well, they are all comparatively easy. That second right hand felt like 'good night, Irene.' I caught him flush on the chin when he was ice-cold; that was my plan and it worked. His jab was like a mosquito compared to Joe's and Muhammad's full strength. He won't look for a rematch ... after he wakes up. But he is a real man for taking the fight."

PURE INTENSITY

LUCIA RIJKER WAS A FORCE UNLIKE ANY SEEN IN WOMEN'S BOXING BEFORE, BUT THE DREAM FIGHT VS. SUPERSTAR CHRISTY MARTIN WAS THE ONE THAT GOT AWAY

By **Thomas Gerbasi**

Lucia Rijker, pictured during her fierce fighting days and during the induction ceremony for the Nevada Boxing Hall of Fame (inset), remains a celebrated pioneer in women's boxing.

Lucia Rijker was on a mission.

Insulted by the queen of women's boxing, Christy Martin, "The Dutch Destroyer" was not about to let that slide. So when she found out that Martin was engaging in a media workout at the L.A. Boxing Club ahead of a March 2000 bout with Belinda Laracuente, Rijker made it a point to be there.

"The moment I walk in, my heart's pounding," recalls Rijker, who was approached by someone who recognized her.

"When's your next fight, Lucia?"

"In a few seconds."

She wasn't kidding. Martin finished an interview and began to make her way out of the gym.

"I cut her off, and then she sees it's me and she goes ballistic and grabs my throat," said Rijker. "Instantly, as she grabs my throat, I step back with a left hook and then I get jumped by 10 guys. It was insane. There was so much drama. All to try to get a fight with Christy Martin."

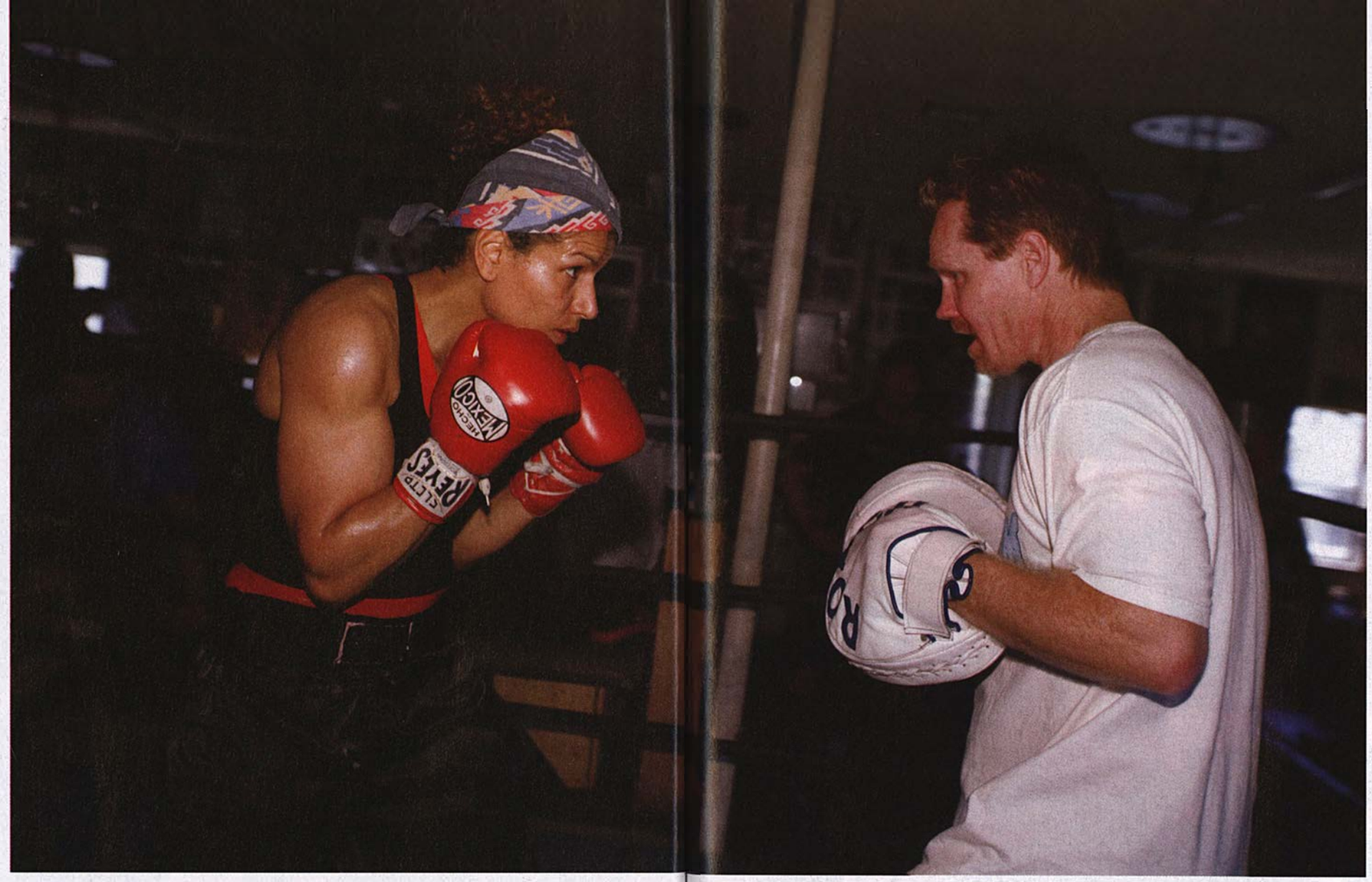
Rijker, 52, laughs about the incident and the entire rivalry with Martin these days. Sixteen years after her last fight, she is well aware that life is too short for bad blood and grudges from the past, especially with the pair being the first two female boxers to gain entry into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota.

And though the induction ceremony has been moved from 2020 to 2021 due to the COVID-19 situation, it doesn't dull the excitement felt by the Amsterdam native to be enshrined among the greats of the sport.

"Who would have known that that kid, when she was 7, would be at the place today where she's at – in the Hall of Fame," she said. "That, to me, is almost like a miracle. It's almost like my life was a movie."

If not a movie, then at least a bestselling novel that got off to a rousing start when the 7-year-old Rijker saw The Rumble in the Jungle on television and found her direction in life.

"A part of me was able to link



Rijker trains with Freddie Roach shortly before suffering the Achilles tendon injury that ended her boxing career.

EVAN HURD

together that if he (Muhammad Ali) does that, you get the attention of both my parents," she said. "I pointed at the TV and I told my parents that was what I was gonna do, and everybody laughed at me and just pushed me out of the way. Who knows why I did what I did, but I was definitely extremely driven to do whatever it took, because I only wanted to be recognized as a fighter."

An athlete from the time she was out of diapers, Rijker excelled in judo and became a member of the Dutch national softball team. At 15, she began a stellar career in kickboxing. But boxing still called to her, so in 1994 at age 27, after retiring with a 36-0 kickboxing record, she packed her bags and went to Los Angeles, where no one cared about Dutch kickboxers – or female boxers, for that matter.

"I remember the days when we had to change our clothes in the toilet," she said. "We were not seen, and I fought to be seen. I remember the sacrifices I made. I lived with bare minimums. All the little money I had, I put it into anything I needed to become a good fighter, whatever it was – acupuncture, chiropractor, massage, training equipment, vitamins, you name it. I slept on a mattress for the longest time and I had one plate and two pans. Just about enough to live and to train. So it was an obsession and an insanity, and when I look back, I'm like, 'My goodness was I focused and obsessed with wanting to be the best and wanted to be recognized."

It didn't take long, at least among boxing aficionados. Turning pro in March 1996 with a first-round knockout of Melinda Robinson, Rijker immediately established herself as someone never seen in women's boxing before. She had speed, power, technique and accuracy. But what really set her apart was her intensity.

Case in point: her 1998 fight with Lisa Ested on the Lou Savarese-Buster Douglas undercard. Someone had the bright idea that night to interview the fighters as they prepared to make the walk to the ring. Interviewer Dave Bontempo attempted to ask Rijker a few questions, but she didn't say a word as she shadowboxed. Trainer Freddie Roach had to step in to answer Bontempo's questions as Rijker kept staring, not drifting in the slightest from the task at hand.

She remembers that night.

"Two or three days before the fight, I would stop talking," she laughs. "I felt that talking cost energy, and if I would stop talking, my senses, just like an animal, would intensify and I would be as sharp as I could be. And when that microphone was put in my face, I was totally like an animal. A dog doesn't come when you call it if you don't know the dog. It goes wherever it feels it needs to be. And that's the place I wanted to be in."

She knocked Ested out in four rounds. By then, Rijker was 11-0 with 10 knockouts and Martin, who had already made her appearance on the cover of Sports Illustrated, was tearing through all comers, making Martin-Rijker THE fight everyone wanted to see. But it just couldn't come together.

In response, Rijker decided to take a page out of the Ali playbook, recalling when "The Greatest" pulled out all the stops to goad Sonny Liston into a fight.

"You gotta do what you gotta do to get that fight," she laughs. But when Martin fired off verbal jabs, it was no laughing matter.

"She said she was not gonna fight me because I needed a gender test," said Rijker. "And that was so offensive. I was gonna get back at her for that one."

Rijker showed up at a Martin television appearance only to be removed by security. There was the altercation at the L.A. Boxing Club. And when Martin was scheduled to fight Mia St. John in 2002, Rijker called promoter Peter Klamka with an intriguing offer.

"I told him, 'I'll fight her for free. Whatever it takes, put me on that card. I will beat this woman for free.'"

Yet it wasn't until 2005 that Bob Arum put together the biggest fight in women's boxing history, complete with a million-dollar purse for the winner. But when Rijker ruptured her Achilles tendon, the fight was off and she would never fight again, retiring with a perfect 17-0 record with 14 wins by knockout.

Fight fans feel the disappointment of never seeing that bout to this day, but Rijker takes a more practical approach to it all, comfortable that she and Martin will always be linked.

"When you had a beef with another fighter of some sort, you actually have a really strong connection to that person," she said. "So I have a very strong connection to Christy Martin, even though we never fought, because we spent so much time on each other in the time when we were active and even afterwards. It's like having a relationship with a person and going through a divorce. (Laughs) You'll never forget them in your life. And that's what I have with Christy Martin. At the International Women's Boxing Hall of Fame induction (in 2014), I thanked her from the bottom of my heart, because she kept me going. There were so many fights canceled and it was so slow in women's boxing, but I stayed in the gym because I wanted that fight. So that was my drive. And the older you get, the more respect you get for each other. We're just human beings. And then you see behind the scenes and what people go through."

Rijker landed on her feet, earning The Ring's 2013 Trainer of the Year award for her work with former titleholder Diana Prazak and even coaching undisputed welterweight champion Cecilia Braekhus briefly. She's also a motivational speaker and even hits a wall bag in her home from time to time. But with that, she has to be careful.

"If I start hitting that thing, I get in some type of a trance that is a memory of the days I trained so intensely," she said. "So I have to really time myself to not punch that thing too long, because I get into it like I used to punch the bag. (Laughs) I become an animal. I go in a trance, something takes over, and I think I'm still that young chick that used to train like a young athlete, but I'm not."

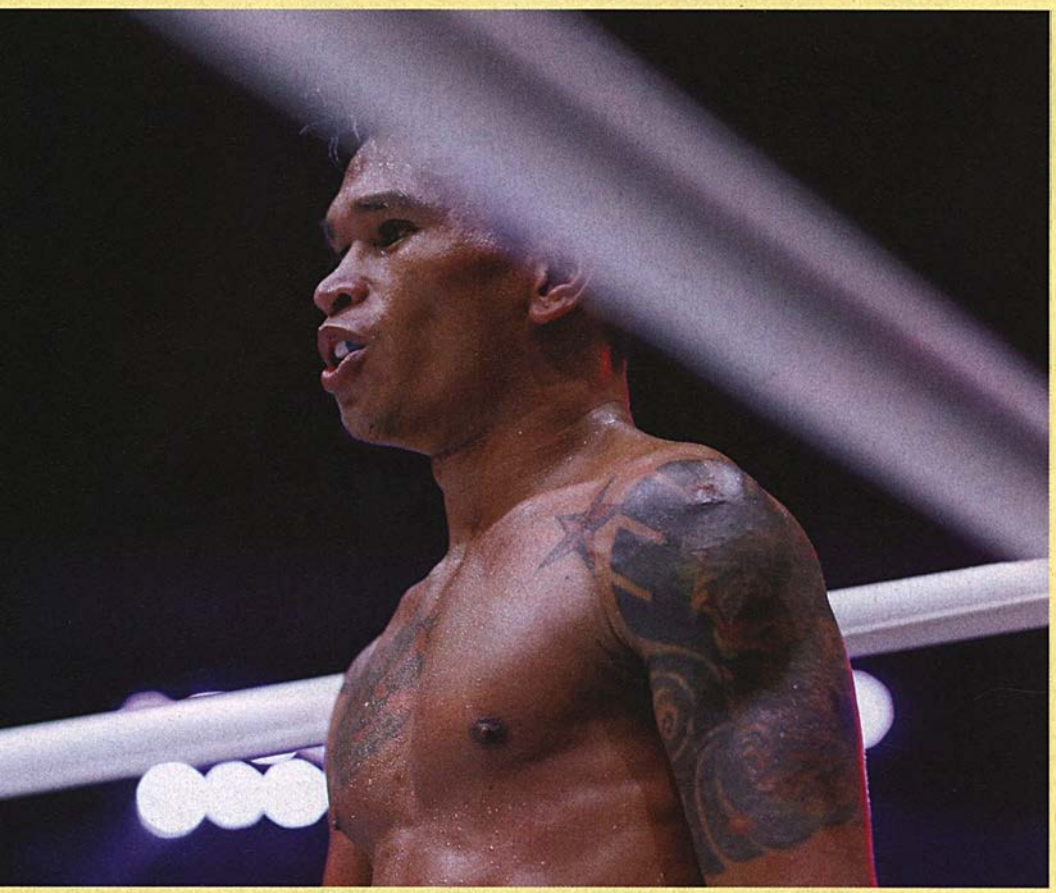
See, that intensity thing wasn't a mirage.

"Yeah, I was crazy," Rijker laughs. "I had such pride. That's why I went after Christy Martin. She insulted me. There was no one on this planet that could insult me without being confronted by me. That's how I thought. I didn't care how big you were. I remember my mom dated some crazy criminal at some point, and he accused us of something we didn't do, and he threatened us. And I told my mom, OK, let him come.' I didn't fear him at all. He feared me. Why did he fear me? I was not a mobster or anything. But I was committed. If I said it, I was gonna be in your face about it. I was fearless."

LITTLE BIG MAN

Following his sensational loss to Buster Douglas in February 1990, Mike Tyson rebounded with a pair of routine first-round knockout wins before facing the much larger and extremely dangerous Donovan "Razor" Ruddock. Tyson won the title eliminator via seventh-round TKO, but the stoppage was quick and the subsequent controversy led to an immediate rematch in June 1991. In an eventful encounter (pictured), the former champion was penalized three points for a variety of fouls, with Ruddock also receiving a one-point deduction. However, in what was his first completed 12-round bout in four years, Tyson dropped Ruddock twice en route to a unanimous decision win. Both fights took place at the Mirage in Las Vegas.

WORLD BEAT



John Riel Casimero is dealing with the lack of boxing, like others.

PHILIPPINES

BY RYAN SONGALIA

With sports on pause around the world, the Philippines' boxers are left without a means to earn a living. It isn't just the bigger-name fighters like John Riel Casimero and Jerwin Ancajas, but also those competing in preliminary bouts and their trainers who await their share of the purse.

Managers have had to help cover living expenses, but they're not making money from the sport, and their main sources of income (Sanman Promotions president Jim Claude Manangquil runs a tuna-exporting business, for example) have often been impacted as well by the halted economy.

That's why the Games and Amusements Board, which oversees all professional sports in the country, is seeking federal assistance for those in the combat sports community who are now unable to earn a paycheck.

The GAB has submitted a list of over 1,000 boxers, mixed martial arts fighters, matchmakers and trainers to the Department of Social Welfare and Development, seeking 5,000-8,000 pesos per person (about $100-150 USD) per month for two months, which is allocated in the social amelioration program fund in the Philippines' emergency response bill to the COVID-19 pandemic. It may not sound like much, but considering that the typical 10-round fighter in the Philippines earns about 20,000 pesos (about $400) per fight, the money goes a long way.

"During this long rest period because of COVID-19, we don't want them worried about their families, and (to) continue their training," said GAB chairman Abraham "Baham" Mitra, who adds the DSWD has "approved in principle" the request. If approved, the boxers would be sent forms to fill out and submit to local offices.

Joven Jimenez, the manager and trainer of Ancajas, among others, welcomes the GAB's efforts. "It's a big help, because boxers have families they need to feed," said Jimenez. "Now they don't have a fight, they cannot earn money for their family. Managers have a big problem about where to get food for the boxers."

Speaking of Ancajas, he is one of several boxers who have used their downtime to work on their private farms. Ancajas, who was supposed to make his ninth defense of the IBF junior bantamweight title on April 11 against Jonathan Rodriguez, has been hard at work at his Survival Camp facility, planting vegetables and raising chickens, pigs and goats on his property. It's a move he'd planned for two years. He's almost entirely self-taught, having learned from watching YouTube videos.

"We enjoy farming. And this is how to beat coronavirus," said Jimenez, who adds that they're

living off the land and only need to buy rice to feed themselves and the boxers' families.

If they're looking to buy rice, perhaps they can reach out to IBF strawweight titleholder Pedro Taduran, who is using his time off to tend the land on his rice farm in his hometown of Libon, Albay. Taduran wakes up at 5 a.m. to begin his day and then doesn't take a break until 10, when he has his breakfast, before returning to the fields in the afternoon.

It's work he's known since he was a child, when his father, Pedro Sr., supported his family on his earnings as a rice farmer. It's hard work, and it takes about three months to produce a harvest, but it's something that Taduran finds rewarding.

Though he's unable to train properly with the whole Luzon region on "enhanced community quarantine," Taduran says he jogs regularly and is hoping that he'll be able to unify with WBA titleholder Knockout CP Freshmart when boxing does resume.

Just what boxing will look like in the Philippines once the quarantine is over remains to be seen. Manangquil says it will be hard to get fans to show up if a coronavirus vaccine has not yet been developed.

"There will be fear until a vaccine or medicine will be there," he said. "What I'm thinking is there will be a lot of closed-doors events, which sucks, but it's better than nothing. I think boxers' purses will be lower than normal because of no live attendance."

Brico Santig, a matchmaker and promoter based in Benguet province, says he foresees boxing returning in the Philippines by August or September. It could be that only essential personnel will be in attendance, like the show he worked on in Bangkok on March 7, when only boxers, trainers, judges and referees were in attendance, in addition to a television crew beaming the fights live. He says he's been told that China will begin holding boxing promotions by June.

SOUTH AFRICA

BY DROEKS MALAN

With the COVID-19 pandemic canceling all fight cards, one way to make fistic lemonade out of a truckload of lemons is to revisit the great fights of the past.

When all-time South African pound-for-pound lists are discussed, two names invariably end up in the first two spots: Brian Mitchell and Vuyani Bungu.

These were their greatest nights:

Brian Mitchell UD 12 Tony Lopez (September 13, 1991)

This fight was a rematch of an IBF/WBA 130-pound unification that took place in March of the same year in Lopez's hometown of Sacramento, California. The first encounter had been a great fight with ebbs and flows, Lopez having more success earlier and Mitchell coming on in the second half. Some ringsiders thought that Mitchell had done enough to win a close decision, but the official verdict was a draw.

Mitchell entered the Arco Arena for the rematch as the challenger, having vacated his WBA title after making a division-record 12 successful defenses, opting to fight Lopez again instead of making a mandatory defense. "Those fans are the toughest in the world," remarked Mitchell's promoter at the time, Rodney Berman. "They were hurling abuse at Mitchell from the moment he left the dressing room. You have to be something special to perform under those circumstances." Mitchell was not quite as big an underdog as the first time, but still a betting underdog nonetheless. Lopez had scored an impressive stoppage of Lupe Gutierrez in the interim, and the belief in some quarters was that he had figured out the South African enough to win decisively.

Vuyani Bungu looks fighting-fit in retirement.

This time around, the fight was somewhat one-sided with Mitchell outboxing Lopez behind the jab, on his toes, with head-snapping rights thrown into the mix every now and then. Mitchell romped home a unanimous points winner and became the new IBF titleholder. "Lopez was a really tough, strong guy," said Mitchell. "He had that Mexican style, and if you fought him, he will give you trouble. But he could only fight one way, so I decided to just outbox him the way Leonard did to Duran in their second fight."

Mitchell retired, made a brief comeback three years later to score two more wins and then finally retired for good in 1995 with a record of 45-1-3, having beaten every man he ever faced. He is still a familiar face on the South African boxing scene, calling the action from ringside.

Vuyani Bungu UD 12 Kennedy McKinney (August 20, 1994)

Kennedy McKinney had made five successful defenses of his IBF junior featherweight belt, which he won from Welcome Ncita, and was even on some pound-for-pound lists before he took on Vuyani "The Beast" Bungu at The Carousel Casino in South Africa.

No one except the people in his own camp gave Bungu much of a chance. And why should they have? After all, he was mostly known as Ncita's sparring partner, having already dropped decisions to Freddie Norwood and Fransie Badenhorst earlier in his career.

The truth, however, is often in the small details. Bungu went down three times in his challenge of Badenhorst for the South African title, but he

lasted the distance and even put Badenhorst down in the process. He reversed the loss the next year, easily outpointing Badenhorst to become the national champion. Norwood went on to become a dominant WBA featherweight titleholder, recording a win over Juan Manuel Marquez among others. If those fights showed anything, it would be that Bungu was a determined fighter with the ability to learn from his mistakes.

Bungu took the script, tore it up, and to the delight of his supporters at ringside, went after McKinney. Boxing out of a crouch, he upped his work rate round after round. McKinney couldn't get his jab going and Bungu found a way to nullify his vaunted straight right, all the time chipping away at the American, finding openings with his jab, body shots and even his own right.

Entering the championship rounds, a desperate-looking McKinney tried his best to find the punch to pull the fat out of the fire, but it was to no avail. Bungu made him miss, took the shots he had to and was even outjabbing the taller man in the final moments of the fight, the fans singing him home. Celebrations erupted as he was declared the new champion by unanimous decision, a victory that got him The Ring's "Upset of the Year" award.

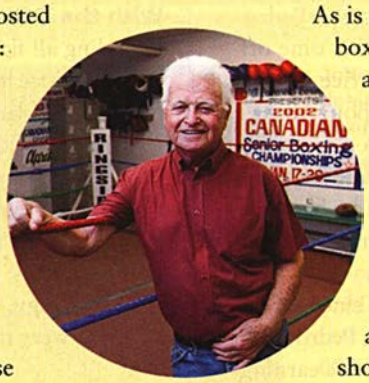
Bungu would go on to retain his belt 13 times, still a South African record for the most successive world title defenses. Included among those defenses were another win over McKinney and wins over former champions Jesus Salud and Danny Romero.

CANADA

BY JAMIE REBNER

As of writing, COVID-19 is still in full effect, with more cases being confirmed worldwide every day. With that comes the senseless loss of life. Canadian boxing has felt that devastating impact, too, with news that highly regarded amateur coach Pat Kelly, still vibrant at 85 years old, had passed away on April 5.

I learned of Kelly's passing by scrolling through Twitter. Russ Anber, the renowned Montreal trainer and cutman, posted the following message: "It is with profound sadness that I learned today of the death of an outstanding boxing trainer and a fixture on the elite Canadian fight scene, and a gem of a man, Pat Kelly. Please join me in extending our deepest sympathies to Pat's family and friends and to the legion of outstanding fighters he trained and whose lives he impacted. Rest in peace, my friend! You will be missed."



Beloved boxing trainer Pat Kelly.

Kelly was born in Delhi, Ontario, and moved to Niagara Falls as a child. There he fell in love with boxing, which led to a nine-year, 55-bout career, according to the tribute for him on the St. Catharines Standard website.

But it was as a coach that he would leave his most significant mark on the sport and his community. Kelly co-founded the Niagara Falls Boxing Club in 1974 and then started the Shamrock Boxing Club in 1980. The Shamrock Club would become synonymous with success as it produced many national and international amateur champions and attracted the best talent from across the country. Kelly was also a member of the Canadian coaching staff at the 1990 Commonwealth Games in New Zealand and the 1992 Barcelona Olympics.

Some of the gym's most notable fighters include Mike Strange, Billy Irwin and Domenic Filane, who collectively represented Canada at every Olympic games during the '90s. Strange, now a Niagara Falls city councilman, has only fond memories of Kelly and their partnership. "He was a mentor, father figure, a coach," Strange told Steve Buffery of the Toronto Sun. "He taught me so much stuff in the boxing circle, but also in the circle of life. He was just amazing."

As is commonplace in boxing, it is the gritty and dilapidated gyms that produce the top talent. Kelly's gym was no different, located in the Silvertown district of Niagara Falls. "The gym was in a tiny woodworking shop, maybe 1,000 square feet," Strange recalled. "Pat would always have the wood stove on because that's the only way we could get heat. We had this small, little ring, probably 12 feet by 12 feet. But it was a great club; we had five Canadian champions at one time, which was unheard of for a small club."

As serious as he was in the gym, Kelly was equally jocular outside of it, a characteristic Strange deeply appreciated. "He was a great guy to have on a team. He appreciated life and loved to travel with us. And he was such a funny guy, always telling jokes. When things got serious, he would always throw a joke out there and make you laugh and smile. And he always had a smile on his face. All the boxers loved him; it didn't matter what club you were from."

A discussion of Kelly's life and career couldn't be complete without mentioning a notable distinction that he earned. Pat was awarded the Carnegie Foundation Medal for heroism because he saved a 9-year-old American boy from being swept over the Horseshoe Falls. Kelly, who was 23 at the time, courageously dove in after the boy and was able to swim them both back to shore.

Although I never knew Kelly, he seems like the type who wouldn't take credit for his act of bravery on that day. I'm sure he would say that he did what anyone else would have

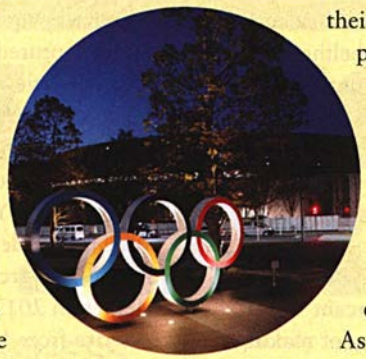
done. But that showed the type of spirit Kelly possessed. That same spirit was evident throughout his life, as he dedicated his time, effort and energy to the many boxers that frequented his gym.

As Muhammad Ali famously said, "Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on Earth." And although he vacated his room early, Kelly unquestionably paid his rent in full with how much he served those closest to him. Gone but not forgotten.

JAPAN

BY YURIKO MIYATA

Cherry blossom season usually comes with wonderful festivals in Japan, but that is not the case this year, as the COVID-19 crisis deepened toward the end of March. Shortly after the postponement of the 2020 Summer Olympic Games in Tokyo, people were shocked by the passing of famous comedian Ken Shimura, who died after just 10 days in the hospital with severe pneumonia and complications from the virus. A worried nation urged the government to declare a state of emergency to contain the spread of infection in major virus-hit prefectures until April 7, which eventually expanded nationwide until April 17.



The Tokyo Olympics will not happen in 2020.

Meanwhile, the Japanese Pro Boxing Association (JPBA) decided on March 30 to hold off on eastern and western regionals of the Annual Rookies Tournament, originally scheduled for April 5 and 26 without spectators to adapt to the social-distancing measurement. The tournament committee is considering rescheduling in summer, but it looks like this traditional annual tournament, which dates back to 1946, might skip 2020.

The JPBA again extended the suspension of boxing shows nationwide from April 30 to May 15. The extension may have ruined the comeback plans of former 105-pound titleholder Katsunari Takayama, who had retired after stopping young prospect Riku Kano in the sixth round in August 2016 but was scheduled to return to the ring on May 10. On May 12, Takayama turns 37, which is the mandatory retirement age in the Japan Boxing Commission's system. In short, the JBC could decide not to issue the four-time strawweight titleholder a license for any fight scheduled after May 12.

However, the JBC has also discussed the possibility of granting Takayama a grace period, given the circumstances.

Under the nationwide state of emergency, the JPBA board called for all 282 boxing clubs to close their businesses to non-professional members, with compensation of ¥100,000 (roughly $1,000) for each location and ¥150,000 for promoters who suffer losses from event cancellations. As the association is stuck with the challenge of not ruining the boxing businesses while instituting infection-prevention measures, it is fortunate that there have been no victims of the virus seen in the Japanese boxing community so far.

However, boxers are struggling to make a living and to stay motivated without knowing when they can fight again, and some have decided to move on. Japanese junior flyweight champion Yuto Takahashi announced his retirement from boxing on Twitter on April 3, one day after he learned that his first and mandatory defense against Masamichi Yabuki was canceled once again due to the JPBA's extension. It was originally scheduled for March 15. Takahashi

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WORLD BEAT

won the national 108-pound title on his first attempt, a 10-round majority decision over veteran Kenichi Horikawa last October. But the vigorous 27-year-old champion decided to hang up the gloves with the record of 11-4 (5 KOs), and with the unchanged love for the sport.

Two-division titleholder Takahiro Ao also left the boxing stage quietly on April 6, his 36th birthday. Ao made his prizefighting debut in 2003 as a blue-chip prospect, having won an unprecedented six national junior amateur titles. The talented southpaw, who idolized Zab Judah, had a genuine sense for counterpunching. He won the WBC featherweight title via unanimous decision in a rematch with Mexican veteran Oscar Larios in March 2009 in Tokyo, and he moved up to the 130-pound division to collect another WBC belt from Germany's Vitali Tajbert by unanimous decision, decking the defending beltholder with a beautiful left counter in the third round in November 2010.

Ao had a bitter experience in going for a world title in a third weight class in 2015. He was badly battered in a two-round loss to Raymundo Beltran, who was unable to collect the vacant WBO lightweight title due to not making weight. Beltran later tested positive for a PED, which changed the TKO loss to a no-contest. Ao only fought once (in 2018) after that bad experience. He finally decided to officially announce his retirement live on Instagram, saying "I won't say I don't have any regrets, but I am proud of all I did in 33 professional fights, including 28 wins, 12 knockouts, three losses, one draw and one no-contest. Although I hang up my gloves today, I won't leave boxing. I want to open my own gym in the near future."

I would like to close this column with happy news.

Former IBF female junior flyweight titleholder Naoko Shibata married a rice farmer on April 4, her 39th birthday. "I already enjoy planting seeds with my new family. Of course it was my first time, but it was fun!" said the newlywed. She sounds happy despite her wedding party being postponed to the fall due to COVID-19-related social conditions.

Shibata started boxing just to lose weight at the age of 19, but she got into the sport even though she was "beaten badly" during her first sparring session. She stuck with it, began competing on the amateur level and eventually participated in the Asian Games in 2005. She turned professional as a first-generation female boxer after the JBC authorized women's prizefights in 2008. With fluid movement backed by solid fundamentals and bottomless stamina, she won the vacant OPBF junior flyweight title beating Kayoko Ebata in 2011. After she was beaten by rivals Etsuko Tada and Ibeth Zamora of Mexico on her way up the rankings, she finally captured the vacant IBF junior flyweight title with a unanimous decision over Mexico's Alondra Garcia in 2013. She reigned four years, earning the IBF's Woman Fighter of the Year award in 2014 en route to five defenses, until giving the belt up to Garcia in their rematch in Mexico in 2017. When she decided to retire from boxing that year after a loss to Tada – again by unanimous decision in a highly competitive eight-round contest – she said, "It was a good, quality fight, enough to end my boxing career on." She is a sincere, kind and compassionate person, inside and outside the ring. She was also disciplined. She never skipped daily running or training in the gym despite having a full-time office job at an iron-trading company.

The retired champion was training people in her old boxing club, keeping her job in the same company and enjoying golf, her new hobby, which is how she met her husband.

Now she is cultivating her new life with her loved one. I am hoping to have a picture of her in a white wedding dress in the season of the rice harvest.

WARRIOR OF MERCY

THE FEARLESSNESS AND FIGHTING SPIRIT THAT TOOK **DEVONNE CANADY** TO BOXING SUCCESS NOW SUSTAIN HER ON THE FRONT LINE OF THE COVID-19 BATTLE

By **Ryan Songalia**

As the moments tick toward go time, Devonne Canady starts to pray.

She puts on her protective gear, one layer at a time, ready to step into battle, just as she did as an amateur boxing champ.

Canady long ago traded boxing gloves and mouthpieces for latex gloves and N95 masks. Now she works as the respiratory therapy night manager at Yale New Haven Hospital in Connecticut.

"When I walk through the doors of that hospital and when I walk into the boxing ring, it's sort of the same feeling," says Canady, 50. "I know whatever's beyond that door or whatever's beyond that ring, I have to subdue it. I have to take care of it. I have to fight."

In March, Yale New Haven started seeing cases of COVID-19, which impairs patients' ability to breathe. It can develop into pneumonia and acute respiratory distress syndrome, which can be deadly. The work Canady and her colleagues do is what keeps many victims alive.

Twelve-hour shifts have been stretched out, with days off a thing of the past. Clergy members are on hand to help medical staffers process the sorrow they've witnessed. Canady says frontline healthcare workers will need treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder once the coronavirus crisis has passed.

She recalls the scene of one man, intubated on a ventilator with the best possible care the medical staff could provide, just failing to improve. Some patients have drafted advance directives, ordering life support to be discontinued if treatment does not lead to recovery.

Patients must be treated from a new distance, behind extra protective hoods and masks. The time it takes to intubate has been doubled, as more precautions must be taken before staffers even enter a room.

"I've seen new therapists and therapists who have been doing this for years in tears," said Canady, who

When former amateur boxer Devonne Canady isn't working as a respiratory nurse, she's helping kids at her gym.

has been in the field for more than two decades.

She understands the fear, the helplessness. She says she's fortunate to have a home big enough to isolate from her partner, who is immunocompromised, while other coworkers have had to sleep in hotels to avoid passing the virus to their families. Her hospital, like many others across the country, has had to cope with shortages of personal protective equipment. Staffers now go an entire shift wearing masks that were designed to be discarded after a single use.

She is still in boxing as the engine behind the Elephant in the Room Boxing Club in New Haven and as a manager for pros like former world-title challenger Helen Joseph. Like a fighter trying to catch her breath after a punch to the midsection, Canady tries to keep a poker face.

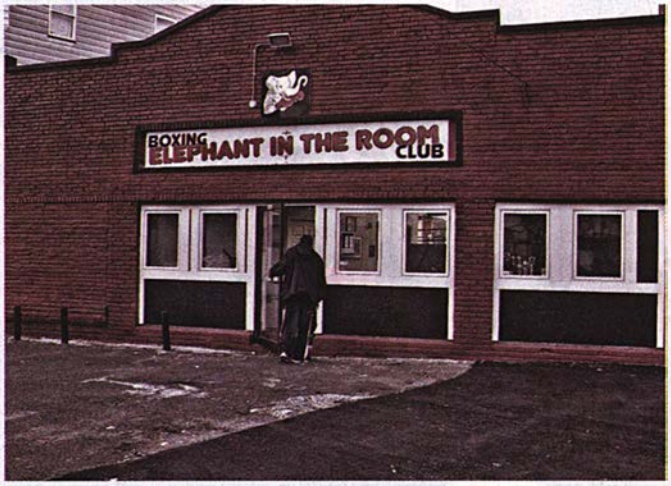
"A lot of boxers tend to be fearless, and that's part of where I get the fearless part from. I just feel like if I fall apart, the whole system falls apart," says Canady. "I'm the supervisor, so I have to hold it together and maintain my cool for the rest of these young children that I have under me. If I fall apart, then I do no good for the patient."

Canady has stood out from the moment she first put on gloves in 2000, walking into the Ring One Boxing Gym in New Haven as a way to stay in shape. There were no women to spar with, so she'd work out with men in the ring. In tournaments, she would usually jump straight to the semifinals.

"She was really in the first stage of women's boxing," says Ring One owner Brian Clark. "She was always strong, always tough."

Sonya Lamonakis, a pro heavyweight and vice president of NYC Metro Boxing, fought Canady three times as an amateur.

"She beat the shit out of me for three rounds, black eyes and everything, but I never went down," remembers Lamonakis of their first meeting, which Canady won. The pair split their next two meetings. "She's heavy-handed. She doesn't really come forward too much, but she'll stand there and fight you."



Canady's boxing gym doubles as a community center.

Those attributes carried Canady to victory in her first tournament in 2000, the Women's National Golden Gloves. The following year, she competed at heavyweight at the first ever Women's World Championships in Scranton, Pennsylvania, winning the only U.S. gold medal. Canady returned to the world tournament in 2002, this time in Turkey, and earned a bronze.

"At that time, there was no (women's boxing in the) Olympics; that was the Olympics of my time," says Canady. Women's boxing wouldn't be included until the 2012 Games in London, and the pay disparity between female and male fighters was too great for her then to justify turning pro.

"There wasn't enough financial gain for me to risk my life in the ring for peanuts," she says.

Canady felt she could help make someone else's Olympic dream a reality. That was one of the deciding factors in her opening up Elephant in the Room, her 1,200-square-foot nonprofit gym in a neighborhood where the last community center closed 15 years ago.

The gym name is a reference to the hazards young people face in underserved communities, challenges she wants her after-school program to address.

"These kids on any given day could be outside involving themselves in trouble, gun violence, because they have nothing to do," said Canady. "There's a saying: 'Kids that have nothing to do, do nothing.' And that's the truth."

The youth gym, which opened in 2012 and serves as many as 45 young people each day, was the subject of a 2014 documentary, also called Elephant in the Room.

The facility has been shuttered by the crisis since mid-March. Canady hopes that money from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and Connecticut's disaster-response fund can keep the gym afloat until its doors can reopen. These days, she's interacting with her pupils through social media, posting daily workout routines, and calling on parents to send videos of the workouts to keep the youngsters accountable.

That instinct to care is what first drove her to pursue respiratory therapy as a career. A pamphlet she received in the mail with a premature baby on the cover was all she needed to enroll in Quinnipiac College (now known as Quinnipiac University), where she received her bachelor's degree and made the dean's list.

The Olympics may have passed her by, but there's no battle more consequential than the one she's engaged in now.

"I have to calm myself down … Just do the best you can, protect yourself as best you can," says Canady. "And this is the job, this is what I went to school for, this is what I signed up for. It's to help others."

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